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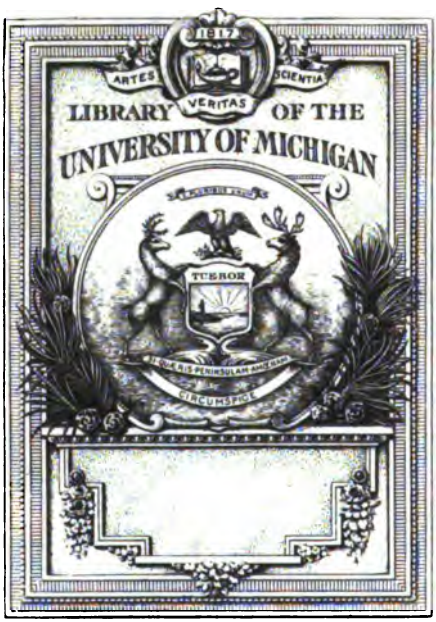
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HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
Boston and New York

THE WANDERERS

The Wanderers

by

Mary Johnston

Houghton Mifflin Company
Boston & New York

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THE WANDERERS

CHAPTER I

THE FOREST

Trees and trees and trees — a world of trees! Little size and middle size and giant size, short and tall, slender and thick, broad-leafed, narrow-leafed, rough-barked, smooth-barked, dark green, bright green, one solid hue, or spangled or variegated with many-coloured flowers, trees that bore nuts, trees that bore fruit, and trees starkly idle and useless to a frugivorous folk! Trees and trees and trees — trees leaning their heads against one another, trees pressing side to side, trees tied together by the endless vines going looping through the world; trees and trees and trees! Overhead, through the network, showed small pieces of sky; big pieces of sky were seen only when you came to streams. Sunlight struck down in flakes or darts, never as brightness formless and unconfined. At night, looking up from the nestlike arrangements of sticks and forest débris heaped between the forks of trees, three or four stars might be seen at once. The host of stars was rarely seen. The big animals, going down to the wider streams to drink, might see the heavens, but, as a general thing, the tree-folk saw only the forest. As a general thing. Occasionally, in their lives, the horizon inexplicably widened or the zenith went up higher. The big animals stood and walked so that their eyes were not of much use when it

came to things on top. The tree-folk had learned how to get about differently, and they had hands, and they stood more or less uprightly, and they used their eyes so that they saw things on top as well as things around them, and they were beginning to think, and they had great curiosity.

She swung herself down from bough to bough until she touched the black loam and the trampled plants beneath the tree. She had a young one clinging to her neck. The tree was a bad tree. It had rocked and shaken and made a noise all night. She was so angry with it that she turned and struck it with her hands and feet. Then she settled the young one upon her shoulder and went off to a thicket where grew very good fruit.

But the day had begun wrong. A lot of other folk were there, too, and they tried to push her away, and though she got her breakfast it was a poor one, and the crowd was a quarrelsome, scolding crowd. She went off and sat down under a tree and looked at them. A thing happened that, in her individual experience, had never happened before. She experienced a distinct feeling of being outside of it all — not outside with a sense of injury, but quite calmly outside. She criticized the tree-folk.

The young one drummed against her breast with its feet. She pulled it down from her shoulder, and it lay upon her knees, and she smiled at it, and it smiled at her. She was very fond of it. All the tree-folk smiled with a kind of grimacing smile, using only the lips. But now this morning a second thing happened. She smiled with her eyes. It gave her a very singular feeling, a feeling that linked itself with the earlier one.

This tree was thin-topped. Looking up, she saw quite unusual pieces of sky. Across the largest a white cloudlet

went sailing. The folk in the fruit thicket fell into a tremendous quarrel, yelling at one another. She scrambled to her feet and made the sound that meant, "Get on my back and hold tight! We are going to travel." The young one obeyed and the two set forth.

Trees, trees, trees, trees! fighting for breathing space, shouldering away their fellows, sucking each its hardest from the earth, striving each its hardest, out with its arms, up with its head, up to the light! and all tied together, tied together with endlessly looping ropes, green and brown and grey, cupped and starred and fringed with purple and orange and white and scarlet! Over all and from all the creepers stretched and dangled. Trees and trees and trees! helplessly many, chained each to the other. Sometimes she and the young one travelled in the trees and over the stretched brown ropes, and sometimes she made her way through the cane and fern and wild and varied growths that overspread the fat black earth out of which had burst the trees. The coloured birds whistled and shrieked, and now and again, in the green gloom, she heard tree-folk calling and answering. But she avoided the tree-folk. She was still critical.

It grew dark in the universal forest. The red and green and orange birds ceased whistling, and the insect people whirring and chirping. The butterflies went to their bark homes.

"Uuugh!" she said,—which meant, "Lightning will flash and thunder will roll, trees will snap, water will come down, and the air will grow cold!"

It all happened, just in that order. She and the young one found an overhanging rock with a rock floor beneath. They crept into the opening that was like the jaws of a

monster, and cowered, their faces down. Ugh! the light in sheets and the noise! There was not, this time, much water. She hated water when it came like this, cold and stinging, just as she loved it when it presented itself in pools when one was thirsty and hot with racing through trees. She had not as yet worked it out that it was lovely or hateful according to the angle from which it was approached, that the water apparently did not plan what it should do nor how it should come, and that it was you yourself who accomplished that partition into qualities. If she reasoned at all, it was to the effect that the water very actively cared, now hating and now helping. The young one whimpered and whimpered, and it irritated her, and she beat it. Yelling, it rolled away from her to the other end of the rock floor. And then the bright light and the horrible noise stopped, and the water ceased to dash against her like cold, wet leaves, and the sun came out sudden and strong, and a snake crept over the rock, coiled and darted its head above the young one that was lying sobbing to itself. She saw the snake and she screeched with terror, then she leaped and caught it with both hands just below the head that was flat and pointed like a leaf and dragged it away from the young one. It writhed and lashed about and struck at her, but she held it tighter and tighter, and trampled it with her feet, and choked it until it was dead. Then she flung it from her, over the rock, and shivered with her shoulders, and then she gathered up the young one, and the two travelled on.

They travelled nearly all day, seeing nothing but trees and the plants that hid the soil from sight, and the inhabitants of trees and the folk whose feet had always to be upon the earth. The world was anything but unpopulous.

There were beings who flew and beings who climbed and beings who crept or glided, and beings who walked four-footed, and the tree-folk who both walked and climbed. When she came to the hot, still, narrow streams which she crossed by means of the festooned creepers, she saw beings who swam.

It grew late. Where was any space for the shadow of a tree to fall, it fell. Always the world was quiet in the great heat of the middle day. Evening was the time when all the world began to talk at once — all, that is, but the big animals. *They* waited for full night, and then they roared — they roared! The tree-folk were afraid of the big animals, dreadfully afraid.

The young one was hungry. She pulled it across her shoulder to her breast and gave it milk, and at the next fruit tree they came to she stopped and got her own supper. By the time this was done it was almost night. Before her there showed an opening where grass grew. It sloped to a stream and it supported two or three tall, creeper-clad trees. Through the bushes about the supper tree came a curious, dancing light. Observing this, she followed the instinct of all tree-folk and crept forward to see what might be seen.

One of the trees had been struck by lightning, and it had fallen upon the earth. It lay there all its length, and it was afire. She and the young one sat beneath the bushes and watched it with awed interest. In their history, tree-folk had met with this phenomenon often enough to learn that you must not touch, that you must not even go very close. When you did so, it was worse than all kinds of big animals!

The flame flickered in and out among the branches and

ran along the trunk. A light smoke curled up, and she could hear the tree talking. It made a crackling talk. The burning mass warmed and lit the dusk. She and the young one were so interested that they went closer and closer. It occurred to her to find out how close you *could* go. So she went cautiously, cautiously, very close indeed. Up to a certain point that was pleasant enough, but one step farther on it began to sting. She jerked back, frightened, but fascinated. Now again it was pleasant. It seemed that it was angry only when you came too close. Keep a little away and it was the best of friends! She and the young one sat on the ground and thought about it. A long, broken bough, slender and bare as a bamboo, happened to lie there, one end touching the fiery tree, the other close to her hand. Her hand chanced to close upon it, as it might have closed upon creeper or young bough in the trees. Something more happened. She lifted this stick with the fire at one end like a pennant, lifted it and moved it to and fro, the fire making lines and circles in the air.

Her brain worked. The stick gave her a long arm, an arm much longer than anybody else's, with active, bright fingers at the end of it. If you could take it with you — No one had ever thought of carrying the bright, stinging thing. . . . The flame blew down the stick toward her and she was horribly frightened. Dropping the bough she picked up the young one and fled.

In the shortest of times it was dark night. Day stayed only where was the red, stinging thing. She was in a region of cane and bush. That was not safe—she and the young one must get back to tree-land. And then, just as she was puckering her brows over this, she heard the big animal.

The big animal came against her through the canes. She caught the rustling sound they made when they were brushed aside, and she heard breathing and she saw eyeballs in the dark. Screeching, she turned with the young one and ran. There were no trees, no trees — no safety — only blind, exceeding terror! The big animal was coming — the big animal was coming — it was sending its voice before it. The young one, screeching too, gripped her fast. She tore through the cane, back the way she had come, and the big animal with glaring eyes rushed after her. It was coming in bounds — closer, oh, closer! She broke through the cane, into that open space where the tree still burned. The pursuer came after her and the young one. It was big and hungry. She felt its hot breath. Face over shoulder, she saw its bared teeth. She found a voice that was human; she shrieked. Along the ground lay the brand that, a while ago, she had lifted and waved. It was shorter than it had been, but yet it was fit for use. She snatched it up, turned and thrust it, flaming, against the muzzle of the big animal. She made deliberate use of fire. The beast that was after her roared and drew back, then made to come on again. With all her strength she fought it over the eyes with fire. Roaring with pain, it turned and fled. She threw down the flaming staff, and with the young one on her back, chattering wildly, never stopped until the forest was about her, until, finding a tree with a sinewy, swinging curtain of vine, she had drawn herself and the young one up from bough to bough, up to where, on high, in the comfortable fork of two great branches, she reached what she esteemed as safety.

Night passed, dawn came. It came still and red, with a mist over a water where long-legged, long-billed, scarlet-

and-white bird people waded about. They fished or stood on one leg pondering the universe, or not pondering it, as you choose. She and the young one looked down a clear forty feet and saw great roots of trees and between them black, yielding earth. The light strengthened, and they leaped and slid and swung out of this tree into another, and then another, and so they went by trees and trees and trees until they came to firm ground and saw below them bushes with fruit. The young one locked its hands about her neck and she sprang and swung, now upon this bough, now with this liana between her hands. So they came to the ground and the fruit bushes that were all covered with bloomy, purple orbs. It was a good and quiet breakfast. There were creeping folk and flying folk in this part of the world, but she saw and heard no tree-folk.

She and the young one sat down upon the ground. The young one fell to pulling at some tufts of grass, patting them and making its own range of sounds, but she sat with her chin on her knees and her eyes down. Yet another thing was happening. All tree-folk, of course, remembered; even the big animals did that; everybody did it. But they did not know that they remembered; they never gave the matter a thought. To their apprehension, each day was taken up *de novo*. But now not only did she remember, but she was aware that she remembered. Not clearly, of course, only vaguely, but still aware. She was going over, she was returning to a time that was not this present time. The big animal, his eyes and claws and teeth — the bright thing jumping up and down and climbing over the tree on the ground — the feel of it, pleasant when you were a little way off, but the most dreadful bite of all if you touched it! . . . Back of the bright thing was the

storm, and the snake that had tried to bite the young one, and back of that was the poor breakfast, and the quarrelsome crowd of tree-folk, and how strange and unfamiliar they had all of a sudden looked to her. And back of that — but she could not go any farther back. It was as though there were a deep stream, and the creeper that had stretched across was broken. . . .

It was the bright thing to which she returned most fully — the bright thing and the stick. Beneath the fruit trees lay enough of broken and dead wood. Her hand went out to the nearest piece, which she lifted and with some delight brandished. She spoke. As yet her language was almost as limited as that of the big animals, but what she meant was, "I have a long arm! — a longer arm than anybody else's!" Three or four feet away a lizard lay on a stone. She touched it with the stick. Then, as it raised its head, she struck with force and killed it. This result caused her to chatter with surprise. She had not been angry with the lizard — she had not laid hand or foot upon it. The long arm had killed it — but she had moved the long arm. She knew certain aspects of death well enough. That lizard, no more than the snake of yesterday, would run about again!

She sat and thought. Then she took the stick and, rising, struck with it at a cluster of purple fruit which had been beyond reach. The fruit came tumbling down upon the grass. The long arm was good, then, for that, too.

Out of the wood came one of the tree-folk — one of the other kind, the kind that did not carry young ones around with them, the kind into which half of the young ones grew. He was at some distance, and did not at once see her. She stood and watched him coming.

The two were about of a height, but the other kind — because it did not have young ones, and did not have to spend much of its time gambolling with young ones and watching young ones, because it roamed more, because it had, perhaps, a certain surplus of explosive energy which set it to contending with its fellows or sent it, day and night, howling and racing through the trees, because of this and because of that — the other kind was ahead in muscular development. Muscular development meant a heightened muscular sense. The other kind had, undoubtedly, a somewhat greater delight in movement and action, from which, in the fulness of time, might spring a certain initiative in enterprise, and a vast and various network of results. The kind that had young ones, nursed them and carried them about, had its superiorities, too, due again to a range of matters beyond its present comprehension. But neither of them knew about his or her own or the other's superiorities. They were a very simple folk — tree-folk.

The other kind now saw her, and after an instant of gazing, came on. Although she had been so critical, yesterday, of the tree-folk, she found — measuring by her standards — she found this one rather a strong and comely individual. She had travelled, relatively speaking, a long way without any other company than the young one. She certainly experienced a sensation of friendliness.

The two stood jabbering at the edge of the wood. She had dropped the stick, but now she stooped and picking it up flourished it about and with the end struck off a cluster of fruit. Parade and showing off — however they got into the world, here they were! The other kind gave a deep screech of surprise, then stood, spellbound, watching

this so marvellous performance, then by degrees, became wildly excited. He put out both hands, seized the stick, and tried to take it from her. There was much wood upon the ground, but he could not conceive that any other piece would serve. She had the only stick.

She resisted, and they quarrelled, both clutching the stick, jabbering each at the other. Both put forth force to keep the thing that knocked down fruit. But there was actually more strength in his long arms and large hands than in hers. He wrested the stick from her and grinned with delight in its possession.

It is probable that, of late, changes had been occurring among the particles of his own brain. Probably he, too, had been making discoveries. Neither the one nor the other might corner discovery. At any rate, he now began to experiment with the stick. He knocked from the tree all the purple fruit in reach, and then he sat down upon the ground and with the end of the staff scraped at the earth and beat the grass flat. His interest in what he was doing grew and grew. She had gone away, sulking, to the young one. But it was impossible long to resist the fascination of this new extension of power. She came and sat down in the grass and watched. She was friendly again, and he, too, having the stick, was gracious. He was a young, strong, well-looking member of the tree-folk. Lying about were some small stones, miniature boulders. He struck the end of the stick beneath one of these, put his weight upon the other end, and lifted the stone out of its bed. The lever was here. Both of them jabbered with excitement. There were other stones. She wanted to disturb one, too, and she came across and put her hand upon the stick. "Let me!" meant the sound which she uttered.

But he jabbered back, and shook her off, and went on turning over stones. Very angry, she returned to the charge, and, watching her chance, suddenly jerked the stick from him. He sprang to his feet and seized it again. She screamed at him and held it stubbornly — a good, thick piece of wood it was! The other kind, now in a violent passion, tugged and wrenched until he got it from her. Then, with suddenness, he found yet another use for a piece of wood. He knocked her down with it, and when, with a cry of fury, she rose to her feet, he repeated the action.

CHAPTER II

THE CAVE

THE rocks rose in tiers to a stark height above the dark and tangled wood. From their feet sloped away to the floor of mould a runway of stones great and small. Long ago, long, long ago, water had honeycombed the cliff.

A great stone, shaped like a fir-cone, masked half the cave mouth. A gnarled, rock-clinging tree helped with the other half. When the cave woman had found food and would bring it home, she looked first for the tree and then for the stone.

Sometimes, for a long while, food was easy to get — that is to say, comparatively easy. Then, for a long time, food might be hard to get. There were times when food-getting took strength and cunning and patience in excess. Such was this time, and it had lasted long. So long had it lasted that everything in the world seemed to be hungry.

The cone-shaped stone and the ragged tree kept full sunshine from the cave, but a fair amount entered in shafts and splashes. Four children played in the light and shadow. Naked, with sticks and stones and a snare made from the red fibre of a vine, they played at being hunters. They jumped and dodged and screamed; they hid behind outcropping folds of rock; now one was the quarry and now another. When they tired of that, they sat down and tossed and caught round, shining pebbles, brought to them by the mother from a stream she had crossed. After a time they grew hungry and easily angered. One struck

another and they fought. That over, a common void and weakness drew them again together. The sun was getting low, the orange light going away from the littered cavern floor. They felt cold. Back in the cave was heaped dry wood from the floor of the forest, and to one side, guarded by a circle of flat stones, a little fire was burning. Never were the children to burn too great a fire, and never were they to let what was there go out! Now they sat around it whimpering. The oldest crawled into the dimness of the cavern and, bringing back an armful of small sticks, put two crosswise in the flame. Warmth was good, and the flickering light did for sunbeams. Three sat hunched around the fire, while the littlest one lay and sucked its thumb for lack of other food, and went at last to sleep. The next to the littlest nodded, nodded, and then it, too, slept, close to the littlest for warmth. The eldest was a girl and the next a boy. Shag-haired, naked, lean, they watched and fed the fire, and with growing hunger watched the entrance. Daylight grew colder and thinner. They got up and went to the cave mouth. The tree and the cone-shaped rock blocked vision. The lawgiver had forbidden the four to show themselves on the farther side of the tree and the rock. If they did, all the ill of the world would fall upon them. At least, they knew that the lawgiver's hand would fall upon them.

The two children went back into the cave. In a corner lay a pile of skins—both short hair and thick fur. They took two of these and wrapped themselves in them. The light grew colder and thinner. They were so hungry that tears came out of their eyes. The littlest one waked and cried.

The two eldest wandered again to the cave mouth. They wanted so badly to see if the provider were coming.

From the other side of the big stone they could look down the runway of stones, they could see some way into the wood. They stood and stared at the concealing face of the big stone and the concealing, twisted trunk of the tree, and the tears ran down their cheeks. The feet of the eldest one moved uncertainly, then with more assurance. She moved out of the cave mouth and around the great stone, beckoning to the next eldest to follow. He ran after her. Shag-haired, with skins from the heap gathered around them, they came in front of the masking stone and tree. Here the light was stronger, was as yet quite strong.

They looked down the stony slope, and they peered under the thick trees at its base, but nowhere could they see the provider. She had been gone a long time. The world looked cold and harsh and terrifying to the children. . . . Yet it was hard to go back into the cave, when, if they stayed out here, they might the sooner see the provider. They stayed, two small shapes huddled at the top of the runway of stones.

Something moved in the wood below. Bushes and little trees bent this way or that. Something that was strong was moving. The children's mouths opened, they raised themselves to their knees. The bushes shook again and nearer to the stony slope; there was heard the snapping of a branch. The children scrambled to their feet. The provider must not see them out here — if she did, there would be blows. The thought arrived, maybe it was not the provider! Terror took them — they turned in haste. One struck foot against a root of a tree, was thrown down, delaying both. Open-mouthed, they looked over shoulder, and saw that it was not the provider.

A man with a great fell of hair, with a club and with a skin filled with stones for throwing, came from the deep wood into the straggling growth at the base of the tiers of rock. Hunter on his own account, and fierce from lack of luck, he had pushed from his own lair farther in this direction than he had ever done before. Such was the adversity of the times that all hunters, human or brute, must widen their hunting-grounds. This hunter had widened his. He was, moreover, a strong hunter and quick of eye. And yet so bad were the times that he often went hungry — as now.

Clear of the great wood, he came before the line of cliffs that he had not seen before. Hereabouts was strange to him. He stood still, and his gaze swept the rocks. Presently it fell upon the two human children at the top of the runway. He stared, resting on his club. Then, from the wood ahead, some sound that he knew how to interpret caught his ear. He bent his head aside. The sound came again. His eye saw the light disturbance of the undergrowth. Doe and fawn, he caught their movement, doe and fawn passing that way. Instantly, he was hunter of flesh, hunter upon their trail. As he had come, so he vanished. The children saw only the stony way and the wood again. A panic took them; they turned, and, crying out, rushed past the stone and the twisted tree, back into the cave.

The light lowered still. Out of the wood to the base of the cliffs and then to the stony runway came another hunter. This one, too, had had scant luck — roving all day, and now with naught to show but nuts and roots and of these none too many. She carried them slung in a skin. She had a club and a snare of green withes. She wore

upon her body, for warmth and for protection against the thorns and briars of the world, the pelt of some forest beast. She was largely made and strong, and down her back fell a mass of darkly red and tangled hair. She climbed the runway. The children, cowering beside the fire, saw her at the cave mouth, and set up a yelping welcome.

Seated upon the cavern floor, she took up and suckled the littlest one. Such scarcity was there that she herself was hungry, and there was not much milk. The littlest one fretted yet when she pushed it away. She broke the nuts she had brought between two stones. The roots she pounded and shredded. She and her young had supper. No one had food enough to satisfy. They ate greedily what there was, to the last kernel and shred. Language was a scanty thing. Uncombined guttural or high-pitched sounds answered well enough for three fourths of communication. But they had a certain number of words of action, relation, and naming. Mother and children talked together after a fashion. The children talked of food, more food. She answered sharply, then gave the youngest her breast again, then sat with her chin upon her knees, staring into the flame. The younger children slept at last, lying upon and under the skins in the corner of the cave. The eldest stayed for a time by the fire and the brooding form of the mother. The eldest looked at the flame and the shadows that chased one another around the cave, and at the black cave mouth. She was not going to tell the lawgiver about the other hunter, for that would be to say that she had gone out of the cave, beyond the hiding rock and tree. *Avoid your penalties — outwit your karma* — was a policy attempted as early and earlier than

that. The lawgiver herself often attempted it, as had done the mother and lawgiver before her.

The provider lifted her head from her knees, banked the ashes over the red embers, and gave utterance to a row of half-articulate sounds that meant, "Dead tired.—Hunting all day without luck. — Hard world. — Go to sleep!" So saying, she got to her feet and, moving to the cave mouth, looked out into the darkness. Hard-to-get-food meant all kinds of added insecurities. She went in front of the tree and stone and looked down the runway and to either hand along the base of the cliff. Not one of her senses took alarm. It was a quiet night, without sight or sound or scent or forward-reaching touch of any hurtful approach. Returning to the cave, she moved past the red eye of the fire to the heap of skins. The girl was already there. Mother and children lay wreathed together under the pelts. At hand rested the club and a pile of stones, and lightwood waited by the covered embers.

The still night went by. Howsoever heavy the provider's sleep, the first light wakened her, when, cool and grey, it came creeping into the cavern. The elder children she shook awake. The littlest one waked of its own accord and began a wailing crying. She suckled it, and it stilled itself for a time. The girl and boy scraped away the ashes and put fresh sticks upon the fire. But there was no breakfast for them nor for the provider. The latter took her long, heavy, and knotted club, took the skin shaped to hold matters or food or missiles, and the flint flake chipped to the semblance of a knife blade. She threatened the children with beatings if they left the cave, and then left it herself and passed down the runway of stones into the forest where even the trees looked hungry.

All day long the children waited, now so pinched with hunger that it was a pity to see their faces. They did not play much to-day; they quarrelled and wept, and lay by the smouldering fire; their elfish faces hidden upon their thin arms. Once the boy and girl went out of the cave mouth and peered cautiously around the edge of the great stone. They saw nothing, neither the provider coming back, nor the hunter of yesterday, nor any moving thing but the tree-tops shaken by the wind, and some round white clouds adrift in the sky, and an eagle soaring above the cliff-tops, looking, too, for food.

Came a splendour of sunset, beating against the tiers of rock, making them red and purple. The provider emerged from the wood, and over her shoulder hung spoil and food — hung a game bird of the largest kind, a wattled, bronze-feathered colossus among birds! The dark red mass of her hair mingled with its plumage. Triumph breathed around her; she set her foot lightly on lichen and stone.

She had tied leaves and moss so that blood might not fall from the borne victim. When she came to the runway, when she was about to mount the stony slope, she noticed red drops. Leaves and moss had slipped. Furrows came into her brow. She drew her prey before her and adjusted that covering. The light was withdrawing. Though she turned and looked at her backward-stretching path, she could not tell in the dimness of the world if there were other drops of blood, if there were downy feathers. Dusk was growing — she was savage from famine — home was up there and her hungry brood. She hoped for the best, hoped that there were about no prowlers of dangerous size, and set her foot upon the incline

that led to her door. The children, looking out, saw her coming. . . .

They built the fire up until it crackled and flung light into all but the deepest crannies of the cave. How warm it was, how genial! They plucked the bird, and air streaming in at the entrance blew the bronze feathers about. The uses of fire were many and good, — meat was better brought near to fire, left there for a time. They put the meat upon a flat stone and shoved it into a ring of ardent heat, and presently it was improved to their taste. The provider, with her sharpened flake of stone, divided the bird part from part. The hungry family ate, tearing tissue and sinew with sharp teeth, sucking the juices. Even the littlest one was given a bone to do what it might with. At last they had dined, and there was little of the bird that was left. They gnawed the great bones clean. Only the feathers blew about in the night air as the flame blew, and the smoke flattened itself against cavern roof and wall.

For all the gaping, black cave mouth, the inrushing night air, the smoke and litter of the cavern, here was cheer within, light, warmth, intimacy, coziness, home! The littlest one lay and laughed and crowed. The next to the littlest got up and leaped about with the leaping shadows. The two biggest gathered together the beautiful feathers that had clothed the dinner. They did not know what they should do with them, but they were treasures none the less. The provider, the cave-user, the home-maker, stretched herself by the fire. Rest was earned, good rest, and presently sleep! She lay relaxed, and in her attitude, her crossed legs and outflung arms, was something of the grace of a great cat of the forest. The

firelight reddened all the cave save that oblong, ragged, black aperture where was passage in and out. Here the black night showed and here swirled the wind. "Ow! Ow!" laughed and mowed and clamoured to itself the child who danced with the shadows.

The provider raised herself upon her elbow, then sat upright. A far, thin noise had caught her ear. With a gesture of her clenched hand she brought to an end the sound that the child was making. Now was only the crackle of the fire and the strong whisper of the wind. . . . It was the wind that brought again the other sound. The provider heard it, thin and far yet, but growing articulate. At a bound she was upon her feet.

Body slanted forward, hands behind her ears, she stood in the cave mouth, hearkening. She left the cave, passed between the covering rock and twisted tree, and stood at the top of the runway up which at sunset she had toiled, the great bird upon her back. The night was black and starry. The wind brought again the noise. Now it was fully articulate. At this point in her history she had not formally named, perhaps, those enemies that she heard. But for all that, she knew well enough who they were. They were wolves.

Back in the cave the lawgiver obtained silence from her brood. She regarded the heap of firewood, then, working with dispatch, dragged dead boughs and rotting bark toward the cave mouth. The two more able of her young helped. All heard the sound now, and there was grey fear in the cave. From wall to wall they laid a line of fuel. Behind it, the cavern was spacious enough; there were loose stones of a size for casting, and these were brought together in a heap. There was the club, and there

was the sharpened flake of stone that made a fair knife. And there were the provider's own strength and instinct. FIGHT FOR YOUR YOUNG! Lives for number like the leaves of the wood had woven firmly that pattern and dyed it to stay.

She stood between the unkindled wood and the black night and listened to the sound, whether it swelled or sank. The children cowered together by the cave hearth. Perhaps the pack would go by — perhaps it did not savour the blood dropped from the bird.

That proved to be a vain hope. Length by length the baying came loud and near. She heard the assembly at the foot of the runway, and the stealthy, crowding push upon the stones. . . . The provider became the defender.

A brand from the hearth fired the guardian line. The flame ran like a serpent from point to point. The leader of the pack, appearing between the cone-shaped stone and the twisted tree, was met by what he hated and did not understand, by what was ever too strong for wolves. He snapped and sprang, but the fire cast him back.

The wolves crowded the top of the runway, they jostled one another before the cave mouth. In the out-shot, quivering, murky light their movement was one to dizzy the eye. They padded to right and left, investigating the base of the cliff; they leaped at its face, found footing in root or fissure, wreathed the orifice whence poured the red light behind which was prey. The light upon their yellow-grey bodies, moving, twining, leaping, gave them, too, a semblance as of fire. They made a violent noise, violent and dogged. The wolf-world was hungry. Fire — they hated fire, screening their prey! But fire might die — wolves had that wisdom. Wait, and watch

chances! They waited, leaping like dun waves, like solid, forky flames, and always their yelling made a whirlpool in the else silent night.

Fire might die — the defender, too, knew that! She looked down upon the dwindling heap of firewood, and upon the children who clutched her by the knees. Then she thrust them away, selected a fagot and mended a place that was thin. It seemed to her that she had done all this before, and that living had in it much of agony.

Fire leaped and played and sang. Rose and yellow and blue, its forky shapes held the cave, a zone of magic between wolf and savage, brute and human. Fire blossomed and bloomed from all that was given it, bough and branch and log. It played merrily, it sang clearly; with a thousand well-shaped weapons it said No! to the famished pack. But when less was given it, and less and less, its blossoms withered and its weapons were lowered. The defender nursed her resources, but it grew that the line of fire was narrower. A wolf, huge and lean, made a bound and well-nigh cleared it. Well-nigh, but not quite! Singed and howling, he made back to his fellows. The defender hurled stones after. Her arm was not a weakling's arm. The stones fell with bruising weight, and with the weight, to the wolves, of supernatural powers. Moreover, she fed to the fire a prized and until now withheld great knot of pine, dragged to the cave from a lightning-riven tree. Up roared the fire, with strong, new weapons. The pack, howling, momentarily daunted, dragged back from the cave mouth. She heard the stones of the runway give beneath the outward-pushing feet, go rolling down the slope. For one suffocating instant of hope doom

was seen as a figure in retreat . . . then doom stood its ground, then doom waited still, before the cave mouth.

The points of flame sank, the fat pine burned away. The defender took her club; the lawgiver commanded the children into the bottom, low and dark, of the cavern; the provider could provide no further. The mother did not reason about it, but there would be fight in the cave until all was done. She took the stone knife between her teeth. Her teeth were strong and white; her eyes held a red gleam, her dark red hair seemed to bristle upon her head. . . . A wolf leaped again, coming over the dying fire-weapons. She swung the great club — the skull cracked beneath it — the wolf fell down and moved no more. Again a respite, then two came. The club rose, descended — rose, descended. She drove the stone knife in through the eyes of the one who came closest, teeth seizing the skin with which she was girt. Her victims lay before her, but she was one and the pack were fifty. Fearful noise, wavering light, blind, swift, unreckoning action, and some knowledge that presently would come, blood-red and terrific, the end of the world. . . .

Without the cavern, the face of the cliff in which it was hollowed ran brokenly up to a wild and broken hill-brow. Here this crest retreated, and here it overhung. Ice had passed over it, and there had been left huge boulders. Now one of these, balanced to a hair, resting on the cliff edge, was pushed from its place and started upon a journey. With a grinding and a shouting noise, with a belting cloud of earth and rock particles, with huge weight and momentum it came down among, it came down upon, the wolves. It slew and maimed, catching and pinning wolves beneath it; it almost spanned the top of the runway; it made a

terror as of thunderbolts; it thrust down the slope; it scattered and spilled the hunting pack! With long-drawn yelling the units fled. Elsewhere might be release from hunger. Here was blank enmity and power, and staying further was no good. Pattering and pushing, they passed down the stony slope, into the thick forest. Their long-drawn crying died away. Another part of the world for them, and other prey!

The hunter who had prized the boulder over the cliff was pleased with the thundering commotion he had made, and with the success of the raid. Now he climbed down the face of the cliff to the long shelter line formed by the jutting rock. Here was the boulder he had toppled over! He patted it with his hand and he kicked with his foot the body of a wolf that projected from beneath. The night had but a late-risen waning moon, but so clear was the air, and so good was the eyesight of hunters accustomed by day and by night to the roof of the sky, that the man saw as though he had been cat or owl. He gazed down the runway and recognized the outstretched finger of wood where, two suns ago, he had paused and looked this way, and then had followed the doe and fawn. He had slain both and eaten his fill. He carried now, wrapped in fawn skin, strips of meat. He also had a knife of flaked stone. After that chase and after a gorging feast and sleep in a hole that he had found in this same long-continuing fastness line of rock and hill, he had remembered the children he had seen before the doe went by. . . . These were fresh hunting-fields to him. He knew better the lower ground, near the quarter where the sun rose, where pushed a turbid, great river. But to eat in these days, one must wander afar! For a long while

he had seen few beings of his own kind. This cave region was new to him. He knew little of caves, and though he made a lair where it was convenient to do so, and though, through considerable periods of time, he might return to it at night, he had not acquired the habit of a fixed abode. The male of his kind was restless and a wanderer.

The boulder which he had thrown down almost hid the cave mouth. But now from one side stole forth a diffused red light. Smoke, too, was in his nostrils. Grasping his club more closely, he rounded the corner of the stone and having done so was fairly in the cave. He discovered there what he may be said to have expected to discover — a woman and her children. It was the female of his kind that found or made substantial lairs.

The defender had put upon the fire the last scrapings of her heap of wood. Rose and gold and violet, the flames lit the cavern. They showed her, still with her club and knife, and her young ones by the wall, and the heap of skins, and the stone hearth. It was cold without, it was warm within; dark without, light within. He had never seen so noble a lair! He spoke — chiefly by gestures, but also with words. She answered with gestures and words. "I threw the boulder down," he said. "Wolves dead!"

He gazed around the place that was warm and dry and pleasant. He gazed at the woman. She stood upon the younger side of prime, as did he. He dropped his club; he came across, and with a smoothing motion ran his hand along her arm. She made no objection to that; she looked at him with eyes out of which had died the red rage. . . .

Dawn broke and lit the world in front of the tiers of rock. Those within the cavern stirred from sleep. The man and the woman went forth together, found dead

wood and brought it in under the rock. Embers were left beneath the ashes. They made up the fire and they broiled the strips of meat that the man had wrapped in the fawn skin. Woman and children and man had breakfast.

That over, the two went out and looked at the boulder, and by dint of the strength of both dragged and pried from under it the slain wolves. Scavenger birds were circling overhead, or watching from tree-tops. . . . That morning they worked hard, stripping with flake knives the skins from the wolves. They cut meat in thin pieces and hung these in sun and wind over a horizontal pole set between two vertical ones. The elder children watched, frightening the birds with cries and flung stones. Finally, the man and woman bore the carcasses some distance from the cave and dropped them over a precipitous place into the wood below. Now let the birds strip the bones!

The man and the woman waited to see them come sailing, then they turned back to the cavern. As they went they talked amicably together. The man pointed out, over the forest-top, the quarter whence he had come. He said the word of this part of the world for "river," and spread his arms to show that it was a great river, flowing through low country. He did not well know cave countries; he showed that by the way he looked at the rocks.

They lived and feasted, slept and were warm three days in the cavern at the top of the runway. Then it became necessary again to get food. The provider and her guest hunted long hours, and came to the cave at dusk, carrying a beaver that they had trapped. Again the cavern knew food and contentment. They ate, and then they slept, with the red eye of the fire never quite closing through the night. The next day there was still food.

The provider lay by the fire in her cave and looked at the man. He sat in the entrance so that he could get the light, and with a stone in one hand and a piece of flint in the other, he was striking such pieces from the latter as would leave it edged and pointed. He was a strong man. More than that, he had a rudimentary good temper, though on occasions he could also show himself violent, crafty, and selfish. The provider possessed like qualities.

The two older children came from a trickling spring three stone-throws away. The lawgiver let them go that far from the cave. When food grew easier to get, and all the world of tooth and claw less keenly dangerous, she would take them, grown older and bigger, with her when she hunted — give them training, looking to their hunting in their turn. The two, pausing beside the man, watched him use flint and hand-stone. He was not fierce with the children; he laughed and spoke in a friendly voice.

The provider's experience had been with fiercer men, who struck aside the children. The last one had done so, indeed, had well-nigh killed the child that was then the littlest. He had lived in the cave three days, and then had burst away, following a hunting woman who had chanced to pass that way. The provider had been glad when he was gone. That was a long while ago — a good long time, many moons before the littlest one came. . . .

She could not well remember how that man had looked — but he had not been like this one. This one seemed like one who had been here before, and that for a long time. Yet that was not true, and no one stayed for a long time. In her world, as she knew it, men made a roving folk. This cave, that lair of brush and stretched skins, received them for a time — short time. Then they went, quitting women

and the young of women that, together, made the only stable society.

The provider looked around her cavern. She thought of the wolves, then, with a backward stretch of her mind, of the bear she had fought and taken this cavern from. In between the two points of time she had fought many beasts. She had hunted in fair weather and foul. At times, being afar, she had doubted ever seeing again the cavern and her young. And she had held the cavern, as the other night, from attackers. . . . She gazed deeply upon the man sitting in the cave entrance. . . . Children, and feeding them, and keeping them fast from being slain. Children, and finding them food, and thrusting away their foes. Her own food, too, and her own foes. She thought again of the wolves, and of how he had thrown down the boulder, and of how much easier the hunting was with two than alone. Within her breast was born a warm, an aching desire for companionship. She thought, "If he would stay — not being fierce."

She looked at the fire; then, raising herself upon her arm, laid sticks upon it so that the cave should still glow. She did this without reasoning, but when it was done she looked from the mended flame to the man who had been here now four days. He sat in the cave entrance and chipped and chipped at his flint knife. As he worked he made a humming sound to himself. . . . You could pen a child within the cave and keep it there, but you could not pen a man. To have him stay he must want to stay. . . . Her own desire that he should stay grew wider and deeper.

The provider raised herself and went and sat down also in the entrance. She looked at his work, and again

without reasoning she admired it aloud. "Good knife!" she said. "Plenty flint here!"

He nodded his head and went on working and humming. Presently, one side being chipped sufficiently, he turned the knife in his hand, rested, and looked out of the cave mouth. The leaves of the forest below were growing brown, were dropping upon the chill earth. He looked over his shoulder at the fire in the rock chamber and the pile of skins. "Good warm here!" he said.

She nodded, then waved her hand toward the world beneath. "Soon all cold. But warm here. Good here." She turned her body toward the cave. "Children good!"

He looked doubtfully at that, but just then the littlest crowed, and the next to the littlest laughed, and the eldest put a stick upon the fire and set up a warmer light. A thing happened. The man's look softened and mellowed. He felt within something that he had never felt before. He grunted, took up the knife again and chipped with vigour. The woman said nothing for a time, then she spoke somewhat dreamily. "One hunt alone — get tired. Two hunt together, good — good. . . . Two stay together — two and children." She moved nearer to him. "Good?" she repeated on an at once insisting and questioning note.

The man sharpened and sharpened the flint knife. Mental processes were as yet somewhat snail-like and it took time to measure a large, new proposition. He looked at the woman, and back into the cave and down over the turning forest, and then at the woman again. Again his face broke slowly into that dusky, promising warmth. "Pretty good," he said, and began to fashion from a bit of wood a handle for his knife.

CHAPTER III

BIG TROUBLE

RUDELY constructed, shed-like, or nondescript, the long communal houses lay like dark beads in a landscape of green, in a warm, temperate clime. In front stretched a fen, and beyond the fen flowed a river. To right and left and in the background waked and slumbered the forest, chief possessor yet of the earth. Before the houses that were large enough and long enough to lodge, when they chose to stay indoors, several hundred women, men, and children, ran a strip of naked, sun-baked earth. Here the children played, and here went on industrial processes, and here were held, beneath one huge tree, the general councils, pow-wows, folk-meets.

The people of the long houses ate fish which they caught by means of weirs and with harpoons and hooks fashioned from bone. They ate in their season fruits and nuts, and they were acquainted with certain mealy roots and seeds of grasses. They ate those animal denizens of forest or plain that they could kill with club and spear or take in pit and snare. In times of scarcity they ate flesh food of a low order. In times of huge scarcity, when it was that or the wasting away of the group and its passage into the land of death, they might slay and eat the aged of their own kind.

In the matter of weapons the people of the long houses yet depended upon the spear, but were upon the threshold of the bow and arrow. In the heat of summer they wore

brief garments of woven grass; in the colder weather they garbed themselves in skins sewed with a bone needle and a fibre thread. Year by year, life by life, they were moulding a flexible, strong, not unmusical language. They could count beyond ten. Simple calculations were coming into the scope of most. Here and there finer brains undertook calculations not quite so simple. They used a ceremonial burial of the dead, and they placed beside the body weapons and other objects which might be useful in some vague other world. They observed the moon and the larger stars, and to every single thing under heaven they attributed a will to save or to damn. They had a body of customs, not yet stiffened into law. Women, the makers and possessors of children, the original devisers of houses and clothes and such things, the earliest lawgivers and gatherers of people into societies, were yet, through the greater range of matters, the authoritative sex. They were the mothers, the instinctively turned to even after childhood, the dimly deified. But men were powerful encroachers, and they encroached.

To the two alike had once fallen the fierce, the incessant warfare against their old kindred the beasts. Now, the women abetting, the men had almost taken over that department of living. Men were the manufacturers of spear and spearhead, the experimenters with stone axe and stone knife. They were the steady feelers toward bow and arrow, the chief hunters now of dangerous beasts, strengthening in muscle, gaining in height, careless of inflicted pain, watchers of flowing blood, quarrellers with chance-met other hunting bands from other long houses, adventurous, bold, standing by wide rivers, meditating a raft, a boat, or from hill-tops watching the climbing stars,

roaming afar from the houses and returning. Wilder than his mate was the male and more violent, as became one who had nothing to do with children. Nor he, nor she, believed that he had anything to do with children — nor with the making of them, nor with the owning them after they were made.

A cluster of women came down to the bank of one of the ribbon-like water-courses winding through the fen. Here was a bed of clay. The women carried a number of uncertainly shaped vessels of plaited rush and osier. These they laid upon the earth, and sitting down by the stream, fell to dashing water over the clay, and, when the latter was sufficiently softened, to gathering it up and kneading it with the hands. When the mass was very smooth and plastic, each woman took one of the osier shapes, set it between her knees, and began to daub it within and without with clay. They wet their hands and worked with palm and fingers and thumb, and also with a spatula-like piece of wood, bringing the clay into one surface, smoothing and finishing it off. When bowl and jar were dried in the sun, then water might be carried without grave loss and meat might be cooked without the osiers burning in the fire. An idea came to one of the women. She took a mound of wet clay and with her hands and the spatula she worked until she had a bowl of the clay itself without any osier inner walls. "Ha!" she cried. "Look!" Setting the bowl aside in the sun, she took more clay and made a jar-like shape. The other women suspended work to watch her. They leaned forward, interest in their eyes. An old woman, sitting by, watching not working, — old Aneka the Wise Woman, — made a sound of approval. "Good!" said Aneka. "It is good to think and to put one thing and

another thing together! Now you can make pots without braiding reeds."

Back on the sun-hardened strip before the houses a fire was burning. At a fair distance from this rose a young tree and to the tree was tied a creature with his wolf descent written plain. A woman came from the nearest house, in her hands a piece of raw meat. When the wild dog saw the meat he made a bound and strained fiercely at the thongs which held him. The woman laid the meat upon the ground, not far from the fire. Then she took a billet of wood and, passing before the tied creature, showed it to him not once but many times. This done, she placed the piece of wood upon the ground as far from him in the one direction as was the piece of meat in the other. Next in order, she took a long, stout stick, seasoned and sharpened, and striking one end into the embers, watched it until it was aflame. All this time the half-dog, half-wolf, was making a noise. Woman, dog, meat, stick, and fire had for observers a number of naked children. Now she turned upon these and ordered them within the house, and when they protested and went reluctantly, she threatened them with voice and stick. The ground clear, the woman, the burning stick in her hand, went and untied the creature to be tamed. He sprang at her, but she lunged as fiercely with the brand, and he gave back and cowered. She spoke in a voice of command, pointed out the billet of wood, and spoke again. The creature gathered himself together and made a leap — toward the piece of meat. She was there before him, squarely between him and it, the burning wood sending forth sparks. Again he gave back and hung uncertain, growling deeply. She gestured for the twentieth time toward the bit of wood. "Bring

me that! Then you shall eat." He would have liked to tear her into pieces, but after many minutes of this work, — rushes toward the meat, beatings-back with stick and voice and eye, — he brought her the billet of wood. "Good! Now, go eat!"

East of the long houses spread a space of earth firmer than the neighbouring fen, more open than the neighbouring forest. Three women were here. They had wooden staves, and at the end of each was bound at right angles a large, rudely sharpened flint. With these the women were loosening the fat, black earth. Beside them lay a heap of roots and plants taken from the forest.

Beneath a tree sat a lean man watching. In weather such as this, and with no ceremonial toward, the men of the long houses went all but nude. But the lean man dressed every day, and that with punctiliousness and ornamentation. He had this morning, beside other apparel, a string of small, dried gourds passing over one shoulder and under the other. They rattled when he moved.

"Ha!" chanted the hoeing women —

"We are going to see
That which we shall see!
We are going to put
Yuba in the earth!
If she rots there, bad!
If she grows there, good!
Yuba! grow big!
Yuba! make children!
Then shall we eat
Without going to seek.
Then shall we have
Yuba to our hand!
Yuba and her children,

Sweet to the tooth!
Then none will hunger,
Though the fish go away!
Then none will hunger,
Though the men kill no meat!
Then those who laugh,
Saying, 'What do you do,
Scratching there in the earth?'
They will come to us begging.
They will cry, 'Give us Yuba!' "

The man with the gourds chose the attitude of contempt before an infant industry. He spoke in a guttural voice. "You are like fish and have no sense! I go into the forest and when I am hungry, I look around me, and I sing, 'Yuba! Yuba!' 'Here I am!' says Yuba plant. 'Dig me up!' — But you say, 'Let us tie Yuba to the houses!' " He shook the gourds. "You are more foolish than the fish. They do not go about to make the river angry. But you go about to make Yuba angry!"

The women leaned upon their hoes and regarded with apprehension the heap of Yuba roots. The sun lay golden all around. "She does not look angry! We think she likes to come near the houses."

But the man with the gourds remained indignant. "Ha! No, she does not! All kinds of things are coming to be angry with you women!" He shook the rattling string. "What will you give me if I go to the forest and sing and dance for you before Yuba?"

"We are going to dance before her here," said the farmers. "We are going to make a great Yuba dance! — Why don't you go hunting? All the men are hunting."

The sitter under the tree shook from a gourd a number of long and sharp thorns. "Yes, they are hunting! They

are hunting Big Trouble. But I, too, hunt Big Trouble, and I hunt better than they." He spoke with growing unction. "Yesterday I went into the forest. I did not go with others — I went by myself. I found Big Trouble's footprints. I found where he had broken the canes and laid down. I stuck long thorns in his footprints." He talked with gestures no less than with words. "I put thorns in the earth where he rolled. So to-day Big Trouble is going like this —" He got up and limped painfully about, then sat down and with his long nail drew a mark across the ground before him. "I did *so* before his footprints. Now, wherever he goes, the pit is before him! Now they will hunt Big Trouble easily. Now he will go straight to the pit they have made and fall in it." He fell himself, doubled-up, upon the ground to show the manner of it, then retook his first posture and shook the gourds. "They think they are hunting Big Trouble. But Haki and One Other hunted him first! Now I sit still and wait for the men to come home. They will give me so much meat." He measured with his arms. "I will burn a part of it for One Other."

The awe he meant to evoke was faintly apparent. The farmers laughed uneasily, with a catch of the breath. "Don't put thorns in our footprints!" said one; and another, "Rub out the pit you've made before us there!" He smeared it over with the palm of his hand, then shook the gourds and looked sidelong and slily at the working women. "Will you give me Yuba if she stays here and grows for you?"

"Oh, we'll give you plenty!" answered the farmers. They laughed as they said it, but they laughed uneasily. However, they went on singing, using the first hoes.

"Then none will hunger,
Though the fish go away!
Then none will hunger,
Though the men kill no meat!
Then those who laugh,
Saying, 'What do you do,
Scratching there in the earth?'
They will creep to us softly,
They will cry, 'Give us Yuba!'"

Far off, in the deep woods, the men of the long houses were hunting Big Trouble, hunting him far and wide. Big Trouble had chosen to make such a path to the river as brought him into close quarters with the houses. Moreover, on more occasions than one, he had strayed aside from the path; he had come brushing and trampling and ruining against the place itself, all in the dead of night, waking and terrifying! So now Big Trouble was to be killed. To that end, for many days, they had been digging a pit in the wood, deepening and widening the mouth of a gully near to old haunts of Big Trouble. When it was deep enough and sharply shelving enough, they set at the bottom pointed stakes and then they covered all with a net of vines, artfully made to look like the very floor of the forest; strong enough, too, not to give beneath the weight of any slight forest creature. But let Big Trouble try it —! For days, also, they had been talking and training, exercising their muscles, trying their spears and clubs, asking help of the Great Turtle who was mysteriously their especial friend — the Great Turtle at the mouth of the great river, who came from the water and laid her eggs upon the sand. Now they were all in the deep wood, driving Big Trouble, disturbing him with flung club and spear, getting him to go toward the pit. Big Trouble was so big, and

covered with such a fell of shaggy, red-brown hair that a flung club or spear troubled him little, and on the whole he was good-natured, and since he did not eat flesh, would not hurt them in turn — not unless they mightily angered him. Then, indeed, he would hunt with a vengeance, filling the air with trumpetings, tearing down the forest, shaking the earth, seizing the unlucky with his trunk and trampling them into an awful pulp! To hunt Big Trouble was to hunt in peril and excitement and with a fearful joy — a hunting that needed beforehand rites and ceremonies, and when it was accomplished, rites and ceremonies.

Women as well as men hunted Big Trouble, though not anything like so many women as men. But when a woman wished to hunt, she hunted; hunted for food now as long since, hunted for joy in activity, danger, and excitement. It was a dwindling custom, but they hunted yet. Half a dozen now stalked Big Trouble with the men and threw their spears against him.

By the time the sun was high, Big Trouble had rolled his bulk very near the hidden pit. He was growing angry. The hunters had now to act with extreme wariness. Just before he reached the pit, he turned. He would go no farther. He stood trumpeting and all the hunters got behind thick trees and crouched trembling. Big Trouble glared with his small, red eyes. Shaggy, with red-brown hair, with hugely long, curving tusks, vast and dusky, the mammoth stood swaying from side to side, growing angrier and angrier, searching with those now vicious, deep-sunk, red eyes. The hunters shrank to be smaller and smaller behind the trees. Their hearts grew small within them. Big Trouble did not mean to go on, had stopped definitely short of the snare! He would stay there for

hours, watching, and if any one moved he would make his fearful, trampling rush. . . . Time passed, much time. The sun that had been up in the plains of the sky began to travel down the sky, down and down the sky. Big Trouble kept as he was; only now and then he trumpeted.

A young man and woman left the screen of a wide-girthed tree. They darted into the open. Big Trouble saw them out of the red corner of his eye. He swung his bulk about and, trumpeting, charged. Immediately the two were behind a greater tree than the first. Big Trouble passed, trumpeting, and the wind of him shook the leaves. Baffled, he stopped and stood swaying, angrier than before, angrier every moment. The two left the second tree and fled before him. He followed, darkness and weight arush through the forest. The man and woman gained the third tree. Big Trouble passed, then he turned. The two left their tree and raced before him, racing straight now to the pit. Big Trouble came after them, and he shook the earth and air. The two took life in their hands, made themselves light, bounded upon and across the roof of vine and leaf. It gave a little beneath their feet, but only a little. As near skimming as might be, they won to the farther side, and with a long cry of triumph rushed to shelter. On, after them, thundered and trumpeted Big Trouble. His forefeet came down upon the roof of the pit; he felt it break beneath him, but could not stop himself. Over and down he plunged, down with a frightful noise. The stakes caught him, the steep sides wedged him in. Big Trouble was not going any more to trouble the long houses.

The two who had toled Big Trouble into the pit marched in triumph back to the houses, at the head of the hunters.

The two were big and strong, young, and according to the notions of their people, well-favoured. Back they and all the hunters came, shouting and chanting, through the leafy world with the red sun sinking behind them, and borne along, slung over a pole, the seven-feet-long curved, ivory tusks of Big Trouble. Out to meet them came the too old to hunt and the too young, came the man with the thorns and the gourds, came the women, all who had not hunted. Singing and shouting, the two tides met in the red sunset, beneath the black trees.

"Big Trouble is dead!
He will plague us no more!"

The sun was going down — the hunters were tired, tired! They ate what was given them, fell upon the earth and went to sleep. But the next day the long houses made a feast of commemoration — Big Trouble being gone forever.

Gata, who had hunted Big Trouble and raced over the roof of his pit, left the feasting ring about the council tree. The sun hung low, the river flowed, a crooked brightness. Most of the folk of the long houses were hoarse with singing and shouting, and drowsy with food and drunk with dancing and with a brew that they made out of forest fruits. Many were asleep, others noisy with no reason, others grunting and dull-eyed. Gata had danced, but she had not eaten and drunken to disorder and heaviness. Now she rose and left the feast, for she was tired of it. She expected one to follow. She had been watching Amru where he sat under the tree. Neither had he eaten and drunken and danced to stupidity.

Here and there in the fen were higher places, islands as

it were, covered with a short grass. She took a path that led to such a spot. On either hand the reeds stood up, and they waved and sighed in the evening wind. The long houses disappeared from sight. Looking back she saw Amru upon the path.

Here, where it lifted from the fen, the earth rested warm. The sun moved red through a zone of mist. The tall reeds made a wall for the grassy island. Gata and Amru sat facing each other on the round earth, round like a shield, above the fen. A last ray from the sun brightened Gata's hair that was darkly red. With the flat fen about them, and behind the low forest, they looked larger than life. They leaned toward each other, they pressed their hands together, their bodies together. Lifted by the lifting earth, they looked one piece.

The sun touched the rim of earth and coloured the river through the fen. Gata and Amru lay embraced.

Almost as soon as the sun sank, the moon rose. It came up round and golden — only the people of the long houses did not know gold. Still the folk slept, tumbled like acorns beneath the council tree. A few old people did not sleep, but sat nodding, nodding, and women who had young children did not sleep. But all the strong men slept, some lying like fallen trees, and others snoring and grunting. The man with the gourds, who had watched the farmers, did not sleep. He had a mind and a conscience that often kept him awake. Now, as the moon came up, he wandered forth from the littered strip before the houses. "One Other" often commanded his presence by night. Now he walked by the fen and regarded the moon. The night was hot, but the lean man felt a wildness and exaltation that kept him above the heat. He wore skirt and

baldric and headdress of grass and mussel shells and coloured feathers, and he moved at tension through the hot, moist air.

Going so, he overtook another who had left those who gorged upon mammoth meat — Aneka the Wise Woman. He shook his coloured headdress; jealousy stung him. "Ha, Aneka! It is Haki who walks here by night and talks with One Other! — Why do you not stay and watch children so that they do not eat that-which-poisons?"

Aneka, wrinkled and brown, gazed at him and then over the fen to the golden moon. "There is much spite in you, Haki! I am older than you and I walked here first."

They turned into the path through the fen. Haki waved his arms. "You and all the people cry to the Great Turtle. I cry to One Other!"

"One Other?" asked Aneka. "Where is she?"

Haki looked at her aslant. His voice sank. "Hush! *He* has gone into the ground for the night. *He* lives in the sun."

The long houses used feminine pronouns when they spoke of the supernatural. Aneka stared at Haki. "*He?*" she said. "How bold are you, O Haki!"

But Haki, having plucked a feather from the future, came back to the present and its so solid seeming realities. A thrill of fear and awe of the Great Turtle ran through him, with thought of what vengeance she might take. "I call to the Great Turtle too!" he said hastily. "One Other and the Great Turtle are friends."

"Can One Other make children?" asked Aneka.

It was the wall that towered before the male's assertion of equality. Nothing with the masculine pronoun could do that! The people of the long houses knew all about

mating. They had words in plenty for that. But they had no word like "father." Haki uttered a guttural sound, half despair, half anger. He walked in silence while the moon climbed the sky. Then revolt again raised its head. "One Other will find out how!"

Aneka knew plants that poisoned and plants that healed. Stooping, she gathered a plant that used one way was poisonous and used another was healthful. Aneka was old and knew much. Throughout life she had had a watchful eye and comparing mind. But it was not her way to tell all that she knew. . . . She gathered stalk and leaf and moved with Haki in silence.

They were now somewhat deep in the fen. Presently, the path curving like a tusk of Big Trouble, they came to the shield-like, lifted place. The moon bathed it white. Clothed in that silver Gata and Amru lay asleep.

The old Wise Woman and the early Medicine Man stood and gazed. The moon looked very large, the fen very wide. The two interlaced figures seemed large with the rest of the world. Aneka and Haki watched awhile, then turned aside without waking the sleepers. Their path, bending, led them again to the edge of the fen, to the quarter whence they had come. Haki walked perhaps cogitating the pair, perhaps cogitating One Other who had gone into the ground for the night, One Other and his possibly developing powers. But Aneka looked over her shoulder at the full, bright moon.

That moon waned and other moons waxed and waned, and Gata and Amru remained companions and most fond of each other. That was not so usual among the people of the long houses. Only at great intervals arose among them some example of enduring attachment between woman

and man. So novel was it that when it markedly happened the group paid attention. It was a social phenomenon of the first importance, and though they gave it no such sounding name, and indeed no name at all, they noted it.

For many days after the slaying of Big Trouble, Gata and Amru hunted in company. The forest received them in the morning; they returned at eve, bearing game or wearing trophies to show that certain four-footed enemies of the long houses were enemies no more. The people praised them. Children were told, "Grow up to be like Gata and Amru!"

Moons brightened, moons darkened. At last it was seen that Gata was making a child. After that, as the custom had grown to be, she hunted no more. . . . Amru was jealous of the child that Gata was making. He felt a fierceness toward it as though it were a man fighting with him for Gata's favour. From that he passed to anger with Gata herself. Gata could not like Amru as much as Amru liked Gata. She would be showing superiorities! Savage pride was hurt. Amru and Gata had a loud quarrel, after which they parted as companions.

Gata went to the forest and walked there alone. Amru and other men were making a boat. Boats were a mystery belonging to men. Men had had that notion, had experimented with it, and then had declined to share knowledge and honours. Men went ostentatiously apart when they would make a boat. They kept a thicket screen between them and the long houses, and they stationed watchers. The women heard the thud of the falling tree, and they smelled the smoke when began the hollowing process — but for the rest it was a mystery. When the boat was made, it was held to belong to men.

Amru was strong and skilful and many of the folk had a liking for him, and he tended to become a leader. Now with other young men he was making a boat. . . . Gata walked alone by the edge of the forest. She could see, between her and the river, the curling smoke where the men worked. She carried a spear, and felt no especial terror of the forest. The forest and its creatures composed an old, familiar pattern in her brain. Within her was aglow another ancient pattern. . . .

She sat down between the outcropping roots of a tree. A play of emotions filled her, kept her in a manner of iridescent dream. Around spread the forest floor of perished leaves, multitudinous, layer after layer of perished leaves. Overhead were the green leaves, quivering and thrilling. The savage woman sat and felt, and as best she could thought. . . . Imagination waked in her. Somewhere or other, she distinctly saw herself, moving beneath the trees, holding against her shoulder the child that would be born. She knew with certainty that she would be fond of it. . . . After this, she thought of Amru. She sat quite still, her spear beside her, her dark red hair shadowing her face. She felt at once old and young — as though she had lived long, and as though sky and earth were new. . . .

Near the tree grew flowering bushes, and in the branchy mass of one was set a bird's nest, filled with callow young. Gata fell to watching the nest and the bird that perched beside it. Hunter's experience, savage experience, gave at wish an immobility of body, a mimicry of rooted life. Gata seemed as unmoving as the trunk of the tree. The nestlings opened their mouths and stirred their unfeathered bodies. The bird spread its wings and went farther into the flowery thicket. When it returned it had food in

its beak. It fed its young. In a moment came, too, the male bird — it also bore food and fed the young. The mother bird perched once more beside the nest. The he-bird perched upon a second branch and sang. "Sweet! So sweet!" was its song, and the she-bird and the young birds seemed, liking it, to listen. Gata listened likewise.

The human group by the forest and the fen, as human groups everywhere upon the ancient earth, struggled with mysteries. Why was thus and thus so? Given a fact, what went before the fact, and what was to come out of it? The mind struggled, the mind pondered then as ever, and then as ever small, chance observations might put fire to long and long accumulated fuel. . . . "Sweet! Sweet!" sang the he-bird, and the she-bird listened, and the young birds opened and shut their mouths and pushed with their wings. Gata sat and watched. A compound happening, seen in her existence a myriad times with the physical eye, now, quietly and easily, took meanings unthought of before. Why did the he-bird bring food to the young birds? Why did the he-bird, as well as the she-bird, watch the nestlings and drive away harm? Why did the one, as well as the other, teach the young birds to fly? . . . "Sweet! So sweet!" sang the he-bird, and the she-bird listened, and the young birds opened and shut their mouths and pushed with their wings, and all around were the flowering bushes. . . .

Suns rose from the fen and sank behind the forest, and Amru and his fellows finished making their boat. It was a longer boat, a more skilfully made boat than any the houses had yet seen. There was great triumph when, all pushing and pulling and lifting together, the men got it into the narrow stream by which they had worked, and

then down this into the wide, slow-flowing river. The next thing was to be an Expedition — a seeing what was up the river, farther than any had yet gone!

Twelve young men went upon the Expedition. They hewed and trimmed saplings with which to pole the boat, for the oar was not yet. The long houses, women and men, watched them depart. It was a high occasion, one that called for vociferation, chanting, laughter, shouts to boat and boatmen until all had dwindled to a dark splinter upon the river, until a horn of the earth came between them and the houses. A number of the men followed along the bank for a distance, but after a time the forest grew chokingly thick and they desisted. Haki, shaking his string of gourds, tossing his arms in the air, went and returned with the followers. . . . Until the point of earth came between, Gata watched Amru, standing in the boat, in his hands the shaft of a young tree. Gata and Amru had not ended their quarrel.

The horn of earth hid the long houses. The boat could no longer hear the shouting and chanting. The fen dropped away and on both sides of the river stood the forest. It was very thick, it stood knee-deep in black, quaking earth. It dropped upon the flood leaves and petals and withered twigs, dropped them into the boat. The boat with the young men poling moved close to shore. The river was wide, but it looked to these Argonauts wider than wide, wide and fearful! That was ever the way with the impassable, with the heretofore unpassed. They hugged the shore. That was daring enough, so strange as yet was the fact of a boat at all!

After some time they came to the mouth of an affluent of the great river. They knew the nearer bank of this

stream; nothing new to be gained by following it in a boat instead of afoot, ashore, among cane and trees! Amru gazed at the farther bank, turning the pole in his hands. He harangued the eleven. The adventurers poled across the affluent, drawing long breaths when it was done. Full of pride, they laughed exultingly. Amru stepped nearer chieftainship.

The twelve kept on, close to the shore, up the wide river. This shore was new. They peered through the rank waterside growth, but they saw nothing that they might not see nearer the long houses. Before the sun set they had gone a considerable distance. They found a bank of sand, and here they beached their boat, and gathering dead wood rubbed sticks together and made a fire. They had dried meat with them and made their supper of this. Night fell. The fire burned on, for protection against the serpent world and the four-footed world. One watched and eleven slept. Morning coming, they roused and had breakfast. In great good spirits they looked at the river and at their boat, the beautiful work of hand and brain! The twelve felt enterprising, gay, and bold. They pushed off the boat, climbed in, took their poles in hand. This day they went a long distance. The river became narrower, the world up here was new. In the afternoon they fastened the boat to a tree, took their spears and hunted meat. Having killed, they made a fire near the boat-tree, cooked and ate. Stars tipped the black trees of the opposing shore, stars mirrored themselves in the stream. One man watched, eleven slept. Dawn came; they sprang up and untied their boat.

Amru looked across the stream. Mist hung upon the opposite bank; then, parting, allowed a vision of a plain-

like space of grass backed by hills sharp and soaring against a fleckless sky. Amru stared; then he said, "Let us go across the river," and turned the sapling in his hand like an oar.

The twelve crossed the river in their hollowed and shaped trunk of a tree. That was a great thing to do and they applauded themselves. Amru felt affection for the boat that had done so well by them. He caressed it with his hand. Suddenly he gave the boat a name. "Tree-with-Legs!" he said. "Ko-te-lo!" and felt pride again in Amru's prowess.

This shore was higher than that which they had left, higher and less heavily wooded. They found a shelving place up which they lifted and hauled Ko-te-lo. Then, as they rested, sitting around Ko-te-lo, they praised their collective prowess, and one among them said that the Great Turtle had helped them across. But Amru said that before they started he had gone into the forest with Haki and that Haki had sung and danced to One Other who lived in the sun. And then, because Amru felt very bold this morning, he said that One Other was like a man and not like a woman, and that he thought with Haki that it would be One Other who helped with the boat. That was natural, said Amru, since men made and used boats and not women. The Great Turtle was like a woman and helped women. Men wanted some one like men. One Other had a long house in the sun, and spears and clubs and boats — many boats.

The eleven listened, attracted but doubtful, somewhat awed and alarmed. "But he cannot make children — One Other cannot make children!"

Amru felt anger. Having been bold he must become

bolder yet — that seemed a necessity in the case. Having entertained the idea of One Other, he must turn the idea away or make of it an inmate, clothe it, and give it powers. He wished to keep authority with the eleven, and it seemed to him that that could not be done if there was retraction. He must yet further aggrandize One Other. "He makes them with his hands," he said. "He cuts them out of trees and sings to them and they come alive!"

The eleven pondered that. Possibly it might be done. Amru's words made them see a hugely tall, strong, much-decorated man, a great hunter and spear-thrower, cutting shapes out of trees that presently came alive and stood and walked. Had they not themselves fashioned Ko-te-lo out of a tree? The eleven did not greatly care for Haki, but for Amru who seemed to agree with Haki they did care. They had for Amru a sentiment of admiration. He was treading firmly the unrolling path to chieftaincy. And all the long house men desired claims with which to set off woman's claim. Their hearts began to lean away from the Great Turtle, toward the big hunter in the sun — *he* who could make persons.

The sun came up over the hills. They looked at the great ball with a freshened interest. But the landscape grew brighter and gayer and they turned toward more familiar explorations. If they climbed a hill they might see afar. Amru proposed that course and lifted from the boat his spear of tough wood with well-sharpened flint head. The others were content to follow him. They saw that Ko-te-lo was well placed above the water, then, armed with spear and club and flint knife, they took their way up the waves of earth. They might meet serpents and four-footed enemies. They did not look for

foes who walked on two feet, and yet these were the ones they met.

Out of a ravine between hills rose a hunting band as well armed as themselves and outweighing them in number. There was some parley, but it led nowhere. The stronger party flung a spear — in a moment began a conflict that grew more and more fierce and red. When it ended four of the twelve lay slain. The eight, whelmed by numbers, lost spear and club and knife, had at last only naked bodies. The eight were captives. They glared, and Amru more redly than any, baring his teeth.

The victor group was one, it seemed, somewhat advanced in the notion of warfare everywhere, upon one's own kind no less than other kinds. The settlement to which the eight were borne had that aspect. The people were fiercer, wilder than those who dwelled by the great river.

One of the eight died from a spear wound. Another had his brains beaten out one day by an infuriated giant of the tribe. The six in captivity saw three moons appear, wax and wane. Then they escaped — Amru the planner and leader.

A storm came up and blew between them and the tribe among the hills. They got down to the river — they found Ko-te-lo where they had hidden her. The people behind them knew naught of boats or boat-making. The six put off and poled for the other side of the river. A current caught them, carried them down, dashed them against a rock, the storm howling around. Ko-te-lo overturned — one of the six was drowned. The five got their boat righted, entered her again and came at last to their natal side of the flood. They put Ko-te-lo where she could not run

away, then they lay down in cane and mire and slept like the dead. The storm beat the woods and roared and howled for a day and a night. They lay close until it was over and the sun shone out and the earth sent up steam. Then the five and Ko-te-lo turned homeward.

They had adventures, but not great adventures, poling down the stream, poling down the stream as fast, as steadily, as the five could go. Between the north bank and the south bank, between the sunset and the morning red, Amru thought of Gata. — Ko-te-lo and the five came in sight of the long houses.

Haki saw the boat upon the distant reaches. Waving his arms, bending and leaping, shrilly chanting, he cried the news. Women, men, children, the place rushed to the water's edge. The five approaching broke into chanting. With a wild and deep rise and fall and swing of voice, they told the adventures of Ko-te-lo and the twelve. Before Ko-te-lo touched the bank the long houses knew the gist of it — how the twelve had travelled and for so huge distances — the crossing of the water and the naming of Ko-te-lo — the hunters encountered and how they were not stronger men, but more men — the slaying of the four — of the two — captivity — escape — the behaviour of Ko-te-lo — the drowning of the one — the final escape of the five — the journey home. Amru's voice was the fullest, the most powerful and the richest. "Amru led them!" he chanted, and the four added their strength. "Amru led us!" "All brave men!" chanted Amru, and the four sounded with him. "All brave men!" chanted Amru, "we who are dead and we who are alive!" He stood in the prow of the boat and shook the young tree-trunk in his hand. . . . The voice of the long houses out-

swelled toward Ko-te-lo and Amru and the four. All had been thought dead. To have five — and the five bravest, Amru and the four — was triumph! Ko-te-lo reached the bank amid a frenzy of voices, of gestures of welcome. The long houses would not let the feet of the explorers touch earth.

Triumph meant ceremonial feasting and dancing. . . . That evening such a feast was toward as had not been since the death of Big Trouble! It was a feast for the return of Amru and the four and likewise it was a birth feast.

The middle house was the greatest, the most substantial, the finest of the structures. Before it stood the carved-upon, the ochre-painted stone, sign and symbol of the Great Turtle. The houses could not remember how long it had been there, it had been there so very long. It had stood there before these houses were built, when they had only very little, rude houses of fresh boughs.

The middle house was high and wide and deep, a brown cavernous interior with a central hearth of stones. Here a fire burned, smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. The entrance to the house gaped wide as a true cavern mouth. Now, seen from within, another fire burned upon the baked earth terrace before the middle house and the other houses. Around this fire in an ellipse went the leaping, the dancing figures of the feasting, the commemorating people of the long houses. From within, from where Gata lay by the fire upon the hearth, it seemed that they went in an endless line, no end, no beginning. Only when the people in the middle house itself came between hearth and entrance-way did she lose the line, the endless line that yet brought Amru, time and time again, before the

door. She lay upon wolf-skins, and beside her the day-old babe. Aneka sat by the fire, and women and men and children passed in and out. In the corners of the shadowy house were kept spears and shields and adornments fitted for such occasions. Men came to take these, changing from one dress to another. Without, within, beat the fire-light. The house, the night without, were filled with forms, now dark, now bright. The forms had drums and rattles. *Bom — Bommm! Bom — Bomm!* went the drums.

The ellipse about the fire without broke. It became a serpentine line and entered the middle house. If Amru was a favourite, Gata was no less a favourite. Amru's triumph for Amru magic — Gata's triumph for Gata magic! In a world of mother-right, births were births. The dancers danced in the night without; they came with measured pace into the middle house and circled the hearth, the fire, the woman and her babe. Amru danced at the head of the young men.

Gata raised herself upon the wolf-skins. Her eyes dwelled upon Amru, followed Amru as he moved. She, also, had forgotten their quarrel. He seemed her delectable comrade, tall and ruddy, Amru the Great Hunter, Amru the Boat-Maker! The feast was his. The feast was hers. She looked at the babe upon the wolf-skin. The feast was the child's. The feast was Amru's, Gata's, and the child's. Her eyes shone bright, her cheek was ruddy as Amru's own. The dancers went around her — they went around her and the hearth and the fire and the child. She looked at Amru, tall and ruddy, dancing there. He was dancing before her; his body swayed like flame, his body rose like flame and touched the roof-pole. She heard a singing of birds, she smelled the flow-

ering bush. *Boom!* beat the drums. *Boom! Boom!* The fire swung, the fire climbed.

Gata rose upon her knees. She began to chant. Her voice was rich and full — strength seemed to have come in flood — it seemed that, to-morrow, she might hunt Big Trouble — save that Big Trouble was dead and done with! The drums stopped beating, the ring stood still. Persons yet without the house now came inside. There grew a throng. The fire-shine pushed from the hearth outward. Gata chanted.

"Folk of the Great Turtle — the Turtle who dwells
Both inside and out of her house!"

"She is possessed!" cried the folk. "She is going to tell Truth!"

"Wise is Haki and wise is Aneka, but Wisdom
Drops in the wood for who picks it up!
Where I found Wisdom I lifted it, and bore it by day and by night.
Carrying it safe in the darkness, watching and saying naught.
Now will it live in the light that stirred in the dark, —
Now will I tell you Truth about woman and man and a child."

Bending, she took the child from the wolf-skin, held it high in her hands. The light leaped and caressed it. The great ring of women and men seemed to come into relation with it; they slanted toward it, it seemed to draw their bodies, to act as a magnet. Gata chanted on.

"Shout and dance, folk of the Turtle! Cry, 'Gata is Mother!'
True and happy that is — but of this child two are mothers!"

Aneka rose beside her. "She has been given *lash-lash* to drink! She is singing foolishness! Beat the drums and dance! — Woman, woman, you had better go throw yourself into the river —"

But Gata's voice sprang still. And the people of the long houses stood like a listening wood. A murmur had arisen, but it passed like a sigh. All hung intent.

"Now, rub the forehead and answer, you who sit by the council tree,
You who say, nodding your heads, 'Boats are men's work,
Children are women's work!'
Now, answer, for I will question you, folk of the Turtle!
From the body of woman comes forth boy and girl —
In my hands lies him who will be a man —
How should a woman make both woman and man?
Woman only?
No wise one among you gives answer,
No woman and no man,
Haki nor Aneka!
Is it not a strange thing, folk of the Turtle?
Now, tell me again and give answer again,
Have you seen how often a child is like to a man,
One child to one man?
Has a man naught to do with a child that is like him —
A child that is like him —"

The people cried out, "Wisdom is on her!" The links of the ring shifted. Amru stood before her. He spoke. "Yes, we have seen. Why is that, Gata? And why are men fond of children?"

Gata, holding the child aloft, rose to her feet. The flame-light wrapped her. It made of her hair a sunrise cloud, it made her flesh like flowers.

"Folk of the Great Turtle — the Turtle that watches the river
Flow into the sea!
Now will I tell you a Truth — a truth that will bind us together. —
Mother is Gata — and mother is Amru!
Mother alike are Gata and Amru!
Amru and Gata came together.
To Gata's strength Amru gave his strength.
To Amru's strength Gata gave her strength.
Then the moons rose like dancers out of the fen —

Many round moons — I counted them — many a dancer!
Then came forth him who will dance strongly, who will build boats,
Who will grow like Amru, whom I will name Amru,
For he is Amru! . . .
What woman have you seen make a child in a world of no men?
I am mother, and Amru — Amru and Gata make children!"

Like a flame she sank from her height, she lay among the wolf-skins, the babe against her knee.

The people of the long houses broke into loud, excited speech. Generations had walked as unconscious observers; now things observed took on order and meaning, came alive. Haki began to chant, and on the wall of the middle house there leaped and danced his tall shadow. Amru sat on the earth floor beside Gata — he put out a finger and touched the babe's hand. . . . But Aneka said, "Woman, woman, you had better go throw yourself into the river —"

CHAPTER IV

PROPERTY

THE sky hung grey, with wisps of cloud. It vaulted a valley, and was propped by hills, long as billows of the open main. In part the hills stood wooded, in part they wore a robe of grass and stunted bush. The valley had a grassy floor, like a miniature plain. It spread jade-green beneath that sky. Far off soared, darkly purple, one mountain peak.

The huts, round in shape and fairly spacious, were built of upright stakes with an interweaving of wattled reeds. Close at hand huddled sheds and enclosures for flock and herd, and all stood together by the strand of a silver stream. Flock and herd, watched by herdsmen, wandered through the valley or drank at the stream. Near the huts boys were fishing, standing mid-leg in the running water. Seated among pebble and boulder a row of old men watched and with thin voices mocked or encouraged.

Evening drew on and the herdsmen brought the sheep and cattle to the folds. A woman came out of the largest hut, a strong woman with dark-red hair. Hand over eyes, her gaze swept the northern and western horizon. Bare hill met grey sky. She spoke to the herdsmen. They hearkened to her and answered, leaning on their staves. Said one, "We heard nothing and saw nothing at the other end where we were." Another spoke in a surly voice, "If I were a war-man again and out of this valley, I would not come back!" A third said, "You might see, O Marzumat,

from the top of the hill—" The woman nodded and turned away. She called to a boy and a girl at play near the folds, and they ran to her and walked with her.

Near the huts rose a hill, bare to the top, hard in this light as a mountain of jade. The woman and her children climbed it. At the top a wind blew, a swirling, melancholy wind. She looked again from this height, to the north and west. Nothing broke the earth-line, nothing came. The children, too, stared from point to point. The wind blew their hair into their eyes, whipped their bare limbs. They jumped up and down for warmth. "The dark is coming," said the woman. "Not Saran and the others!"

Said the boy: "Let us go have supper! Bhuto is going to sing to us of how Bin-Bin killed the giantess!"

They went down the hillside. The boy and girl capered and danced upon the path. "Saran will bring me a bow and arrows and a dance-necklace!" cried the first; and "Saran will bring me a dance-necklace and an earring!" answered the second. They turned upon the red-haired woman. "What else will he bring, Mother?"

"Sheep and cattle and men to keep them, spears and shields and pieces of copper, grain and skins, and ornaments to wear."

The boy danced and capered. "I am going to grow big! I am going to be war-head like Saran my father! I am going to fight other-people! I am going to bring home every kind of thing!"

They came to the level of huts, folds, and whispering stream. Earth and air that had been grey and green were now grey and purple. Fires burned in the larger huts, and the smoke, puffing out of the hole in the thatch, drifted and eddied. A smell of seething flesh wrapped the place.

In pots of baked clay women were cooking the meat of sheep and goats.

Young, and in prime, and old, there were many women. Within wall and without wall showed the signs of their industries. They were weavers and made from the hair of the flocks a texture that to an extent took the place of the immemorial garments of beast-skins or of woven grass. They were potters, and they skilfully constructed baskets, great and small. Tanners, their tannery told where it was situated, a little down the stream. Living now upon creatures which they had corralled and mastered, the group, women and men, were mastered by the mastered and become wanderers and pasture-seekers. When this valley showed eaten up and small for the herds, another would be sought. Therefore there was little planting about the reed huts. But what farming and gardening was practised belonged, of old times, to women, and theirs were the stone mills for the bruising and grinding of grain. The indoor gear was counted theirs, and the rule of the house. Women and men, the group reckoned descent and took name from the side of the mother.

The woman who had climbed the hill was a chief woman. There were old women, wrinkled and wise, as there were old men, who sat by the fire or in the sun and were listened to and in much obeyed. But this woman, through native energy and also because she was paired with the strongest man, had achieved authority before she was old. The valley called her Marzumat.

Marzumat had few idle bones in her body. When now she went indoors, into the largest of the huts, she came to the hearth, she helped with the pots of meat. One great pot, steaming like a fire-mountain, must be lifted from the

place of mightiest heat. With a rude handle, unwieldy and heated, it presented a weight for strong arms. Marzumat lifted it, swung it clear from the flame, and set it upon the unreddened hearth. With two or three of her fellows she took meal, mixed it with milk and water, made cakes, and, kneeling, baked them upon slabs of stone sunk in coals. Those around her talked; the place was filled with voices. Marzumat could speak on occasion, but to-night she was silent, her mind following Saran and the war-men.

The formless dark came down. Women lighted the torches of resinous wood, and women brought and filled from the huger pots bowls of fire-dried clay and trough-like trenchers of wood, and a woman, standing in the doorway, blew the summoning ram's horn. All — women, old men and children and the herdsmen — ate together, in this greatest hut where the mess had been cooked, or just without, seated on the ground, in the light of the torches. Noticeably, there lacked young men and men in their prime. Among the herdsmen sat young men and middle-aged men. But certain of these were simple of look or in some way weak or maimed, and others had copper rings about their necks. That meant that the ring-wearers did not belong by nature to the group, but had been seized from some other group. No longer were they hunters or war-men. They were tamed to keeping the flocks and herds of the captors, companions to the weaker and duller of the captors' own group. The intractable were killed, as were the too weak or dull. Class and caste were in the world.

The fire and the torches threw a smoky and uneven light. The sky hung black and low, a roof of cloud. The stream murmured over pebbles. It was the lambing season, and from the folds rose a continuous low noise, from

the ewes and their young. In the circle of fire and torch-light shadows were thrown against the walls. The shadows rose and fell; now they were dwarfs and now they were giants and now they were something in between. The shadows were chiefly those of women. Women forms passed from darkness into light, from light into darkness, from darkness again into light. Marzumat was seated now and the fire-shine struck her brow and breast and knee. Behind her, on the wall, spread and towered her shadow.

Supper eaten, occurred a lingering, for the night was cold and the fire was warm. The smaller children went away, to creep under sheep-skins and fall asleep; the babes were hushed already, except a sick one that wailed in a hut a stone-cast away. A fire burned in the hut, and a woman passed to and fro before it, the babe in her arms. Certain herdsmen went to the folds and pens, others sat still about the fire in the open air. The older children, the old men, the many women remained in the zone of warmth and light. Talk was chiefly of the war-band that had gone forth against other-people dwelling by the purple mountain. Valley people and mountain people each had eyes for an intermediate rolling and verdant, desirable pasturage. Mountain war-men had struck a valley herd that had put hoof into this region, taking the beasts and killing the herdsmen. Now there was to be retaliation, and all the strong men had gone forth to retaliate and something beyond. Not in the memory of the valley people had there been such a Punitive Expedition!

Marzumat's children, the girl and the boy, hung around a man with pale-blue eyes and a hawk nose and beard and hair as white as the fleece of a lamb. "Bhuto, Bhuto! Sing us about how we used to do!"

Bhuto sang out of the history of the group. In part he knew and in part he made up. He fixed his eyes upon the night beyond the fire, he marked time with a large foot and a veinous hand. He had a sonorous voice, a capacious memory, and a seeing eye. To-night the strain, the wishing-to-know felt throughout the cluster, was apprehended by him more clearly than by most. So his voice deepened, his words rang, the acts he narrated seemed neither far off nor obscure. Presently the whole cluster was listening. Bhuto chanted of long-since raids and war-bands.

The boy and girl sat beside his knees. Bhuto came to a traditional pause. Part one of the ballad was done.

The girl spoke. "Bhuto, why are there no war-women? Why do not women go with war-bands and fight other-people?"

"Once they did," answered Bhuto. "That was long ago."

"Why did they stop?"

"It was seen that peoples died — not here a man and here a woman — but peoples."

"How did they die?"

"They were not born. So it was seen that women must not be killed and killed. So the women and men held a great council, and after that there were war-men, but not war-women."

"But Bin-Bin killed the giantess —"

"Yes. Every people had a giantess who would not stay at home. The one Bin-Bin killed was a war-head. She was tall as a tree and she could run like a deer and see at night like an owl, and when she shouted the wood shook! But Bin-Bin killed her. Now women all stay with the houses and the flocks and herds. If other-people come here and

make fight, they will fight. But they do not make war-bands. Men do that. Men have bows and arrows and shields and spears."

The girl fell silent, sitting with her chin upon her knees. Bhuto began to chant the second half of the ballad.

A great distance away, as these people counted distance, behind the curtain of hills, at the foot of the mountain peak, the cloud-roofed day and evening had gone after another fashion. It had gone with struggle, fury, jubilation, terror, death, and subjection.

The war-band from the valley numbered a hundred men. The group upon which they fell in the hour before dawn fought back, men and women. But it was taken by surprise and bewildered, and many could not reach their weapons, and many were pierced with spears almost before they rose from sleep. The hundred wrought havoc, slew and bound. When the east showed purple, resistance lay dead, or glared, with tied hands, from a space into which, naked, it had been driven like a beast. The old men, the old women, the young children, were put to death. Many strong men and women lay slain. Resistance, raging, biting at its bonds, came to be the resistance of not more than the hundred could handle as captives. They set the huts afire, but not before there was gathered from them spoil and booty. This group had possessed flocks and herds. Flocks and herds were taken for riches for the group in the valley. The valley men had never before had so complete a victory. This was different from mere raids against herds or herdsmen, or chance contests upon plain or hill, away from the houses, away from the heaped goods!

The attackers sat down and ate and drank and rested

from labour in the light of the burning huts, under the shadow of the purple mountain. They rejoiced when they looked at the heap of spoil, and at the sheep and the cattle and the human dead and the captives.

The leader of the hundred was a strong man, tall and ruddy, with the seeming of one who would march in front. In other lives, before war between human beings had well developed, he would have been a leader of the chase, a mighty hunter of the four-footed, a chief in expeditions, explorations. Now he was war-head.

He and all the other men from the valley rested through a smoky, a fire-filled night. When the day came they prepared their leave-taking. Yet another distance away dwelled another group, that, seeing a glow in the night, might send *their* war-men in strength. War was an endless chain, though these minds were not advanced enough to find that out.

Back among the huts in the valley the night passed, the day following passed, another night passed. The cloud-roof sank to the horizon, the sky above sprang high and clear. Dawn arose with purple figures in the east that looked like girdles and necklaces of tinted shells and pebbles. Dawn in the north and west showed a cool pallor, a blank wall behind the long hills.

The women came singly or in clusters from the huts, the herdsmen from where they had slept apart in a structure built against the sheep-fold, the older children with the women. All looked to the north and west, as they had done many times since the hundred went out. Now they were rewarded — now they saw the war-men coming back!

They saw them upon the top of a bare hill, drawn against the pale wall, and following them captives, and sheep and

goats and cattle and asses, and these last heaped and burdened with the lighter spoil. The people of the huts shouted, leaped in the air, clapped their hands together.

"Marzumat! They are coming!"

"Bina! They are coming!"

"Ito! They are coming!"

The war-men had with them horns, a rude drum and cymbals. Faint clangour and blaring fell from the hill-top to the huts by the stream. The frieze showed black against the pale wall, then the east brightened and gave it colour. The line bent, came down over the shoulder of the hill. The horns blew, the cymbals clanged, the drum beat louder and louder. In the huts were yet a drum, cymbals fashioned of copper, ox-horns. The women snatched these — all who could run and hasten poured from the huts by the stream, hurried with cries and music of welcome over the valley floor. They went with a dancing step, and Marzumat at the head lifted the cymbals and clanged them together. The two bands met by the stream, where the mist was slowly lifting.

The war-head's name was Saran. He and Marzumat met first. "Hail, Saran! Hail, Saran!" she cried with laughter and jubilee. "Hail, Marzumat!" he answered, and shook his copper-pointed spear and struck it against his shield of plaited osier bound with leopard-skin.

All met with acclaim, shouting out triumph and welcome. The older children took part. The native-born herdsmen joined in. Those herdsmen who were born on the farther side of a mountain or a river made slighter welcome. But of these some had been taken young and hardly remembered their own people, and some had been broken in, or, indifferent, took luck as they found it. Besides, the

group against which the war-men had gone was not their group, and that being so, was outside their range of sympathies. So the herdsmen, too, shouted.

Of the war-men who had gone forth, seven or eight made no returning. For these the valley, when it had caught breath, burst into ceremonial mourning. Out of the mass sound emerged a sharper crying, a wailing of those most fond of the slain men, mourning that persisted when the other ceased. The other ceased because, death to the contrary, here was so much victory and spoil! Jubilation remounted. In the background rose the lowing and bleating of the captured herds. There was a great, swarming noise, and movement to and fro.

The first welcome gone by, there came into fuller notice the fruits of the raid, the greatest in the memory of the group. Those who had stayed by the huts saw the new flocks and herds, and that possessions would be increased. There would be need of a larger valley, of a plain! Hearts swelled with self-acclaim. The confused bleating and lowing was sweet as flutes and pipes in their ears.

There was pushed forward one part of the human spoil. The war-men exhibited the other-men whom they had taken. New herds would have new herdsmen. Trees that must be hacked down, drudging work that must be done, would not take war-men's valuable time! Moreover, there was now experienced, and would be further experienced, a dark pleasure in authority, in power exercised over another. So long had human beings had power over beasts that exhilaration was passing from that situation. Authority there had lost its first lusciousness. Once it had had that taste. But with the taking of beings formed like themselves zest had come back to the palate.

The valley group was accustomed to such captives. It was among accepted things that bands of men, roving afar, meeting other bands of men, should capture, when they did not kill, and keep the captured for use. That was old story, old song. The women, the old men, and the striplings made loud admiration over these riches also, and the evidenced prowess of valley men. The swarm worked again and there came into the foreground the before-time obscured, other row of captives.

Silence fell among the valley people, astonishment upon those who had stayed, upon those who had gone, embarrassment. Marzumat was the first to speak. "*Women*—"

Saran answered with a wave of his arm. "Women we took and brought to you women. We take men to work for us and save us trouble. Now you shall have women to work for you and do as you tell them. Why not?" He spread his arms. "We took them for you, O women, — a gift!"

The throng worked. Insensibly, the women of the group drew together, leaving each woman the side of some man. They became compact, unitary, the woman with the dark-red hair in front. Presently the women of the valley were massed here, the men there. Between stood or lay, fallen upon the ground, the captive women. They were twelve in number.

Marzumat spoke. "Never, O Saran, — never, men of the valley, never, O women, was there heard of such a thing! You have committed evil! Mao-Tan will say to In-Tan, 'Let us smite them!'"

Her voice rose loudly, her arms were spread to the skies. Behind her the serried women echoed assent. The warmen moved a little, to and fro. "Talk for us, O Saran!"

Marzumat's voice went on. "Men may take other men. If women, fighting side by side with war-men are killed, they are killed. Mao-Tan says, 'It cannot be helped.' But men may not take women and bind them and say to them, 'Come!' or 'Go!' Mao-Tan! — Mao-Tan!"

Saran faced Marzumat. He threw out his hands. "We took trouble, O Marzumat! We set up a stone and burned food upon it, and poured drink for Mao-Tan. We danced and sang before her. Then we did the same for In-Tan. In-Tan will keep Mao-Tan from being angry. Otherwise she might be angry for a while! But we saw In-Tan sitting like an eagle upon a tree and heard him talking like the wind. He said, O Marzumat, that valley people were his people, and that Mao-Tan was not angry!"

The war-men made a deep, corroborating sound. They had seen the eagle and heard the whistling and searching noise, and Saran's imagination leading, they had divined the words. A black-bearded man, next to Saran in moral weight, gave articulate testimony. "O women of the valley! In-Tan said that Mao-Tan and he held in hatred other-people, and cared not what befell them, whether they were women or whether they were men!"

Saran continued. "We take men to work for us; why should you not have women to work for you and do as you tell them? They are not our men. They are not our women. Other-group-men, other-group-women! Old Bhuto says that, long-time-ago, it was a new thing to make other-men work for us and be our herdsmen. At first, Bhuto says, we had men who did not like that. But soon they felt like the rest of us. — We thought, O Marzumat, that we would please you! O women of the valley! they can carry water for you and grind the corn. It is

pleasant to rest while another works! Many things are right when they are other-people. They will call you 'mistress' and do as you tell them —"

The body of the valley women seemed slightly to sway. Two or three voices were lifted. "Let us take them! Let us keep them! There grows so much work to do!" The women and the war-men seemed to slant toward each other.

The black-bearded man spoke again in a loud and cheerful voice. "They are riches, O women! It is pleasant to be saved weariness. It is sweeter than honey and like the wearing of ornaments to sit and see other-people do what we bid! Now men have the most ornaments and rest longer under the trees!"

A woman burst into laughter. "Mao-Tan knows that that is so!"

But Marzumat spoke again. "Men take other-men. But women have not taken other-women. Now, to-day, shall men lay hands upon women and cry, 'Our prize and our riches'?"

"If we took them, O Marzumat, O women, did we not take them for you? It is your bidding that they will do! They are your prize and your riches! Take them now, and is it not as if you had taken them yonder" — he gestured with his spear toward the purple mountain — "taken them yonder yourselves, and brought them to the valley?"

"What you say is true, O Saran!"

The women behind her echoed, "It is true." If, then, it was true, and if Mao-Tan was not jealous for women? . . . Ornaments were desirable, and ease from work was desirable — riches were desirable — and power — power more than anything was desirable! . . . The soul of Marzumat inclined toward service from those other-women.

"They are a gift!" said Saran. "If Mao-Tan is not angry, why should Marzumat be so?"

Why indeed? Marzumat lifted her hands. "I do not know. — Where are the children of these women?"

"Not all had children. — These people are other-group people. In-Tan does not care for them — Mao-Tan does not care for them! The women are yours. We only took them for you."

The day was bright and sunny, the valley a cheerful green. The men were back from danger with victory. The valley had new wealth; every one wanted to be rejoicing, to be counting the goods. . . . The twelve other-group women, young women and women in their prime, stood or crouched, sullen and vengeful in their bonds. Only one spoke. "May our gods slay your gods! May our gods kill and devour your children! Vile, vile, — you are vile and your gods are vile!"

Anger broke against her, anger of women and of men. She had cried out loudly. Moving as she did out of the cluster of her fellows, she had come to face Marzumat and the children of Marzumat. Her arms being bound she could not gesture with hand or finger. But she jerked her head, and her eyes burned toward those she fronted. "Mo-Tal hear me!" she cried. "Slay their gods and them! Mo-Tal! Mo-Tal! Slay their children!"

Marzumat grew all red. Her brows drew together, a vein in her forehead swelled, her nostrils widened, her teeth were uncovered, and her dark-red hair appeared to bristle. She stood for a moment tense and still, then, moving forward, she struck the mountain woman a blow that brought her to the earth. "Mao-Tan turn your talk upon yourself!"

The valley women behind her laughed with anger, and also now with willingness to triumph. "Their gods are not strong like our gods! They can do naught! — Let us keep them and make them work!"

"Agreed!" said Marzumat, the red yet in her face and the vein showing in her forehead.

The lambing season, the spring season, the season of fresh green and of birds that sang from every flowering bush passed into a summer hot and dry. The stream shrank to a silver thread, the flocks found but parched herbage. Sometimes clouds came up, but they never overspread the blue vault. They rolled away, and the earth again lay bare beneath the sun. The sun bleached the huts, turned brown the growth upon the hillsides, and the standing trees. The herdsmen went afar with the bands of the four-footed. The bondwomen carried water over the wide, pebbled stretch from which the stream had gone, or kneeling before hollowed stones, beat and ground the corn into meal. The weather made a fever in the blood. It was weather in which effect followed like a hound at the heels of cause.

A woman stood in the doorway of one of the huts. She looked at the grinding women, but looked somewhat absently. It was not a novelty now — other-group women grinding the valley corn! Presently, however, she remarked an absence. "Where is Gilhumat?"

A woman looked up from the grinding, shaking elf-locks from her eyes. "Endar, the black-bearded, shot an arrow at a great bird. The bird fell over the hill-top. Endar bade Gilhumat stop her grinding and go find the bird."

The woman in the doorway turned her head over her shoulder. "Marzumat, come hither!"

Marzumat came out of the dusk. "Endar," said the first woman, "shot a bird and it fell over the hill-top. Endar bade Gilhumat stop her grinding and go find the bird!"

"Where is Endar?"

"Lying under the tree yonder. — There is Gilhumat now!"

They watched Gilhumat coming down the hillside. She bore upon her shoulders a large bird, its plumage showing copper hues in the sun. Marzumat looked at her with her brows knitted, her lips parted. Gilhumat approached the level ground, came upon it, and to the tree under which Endar had stretched his length. She lowered the bird from her shoulder and it lay motionless beside the war-man. Gilhumat returned to her grinding.

The woman with the dark-red hair breathed quickly. Leaving the doorway she moved through the beating sun to the tree where lay Endar. "Endar!"

Endar sat up. "What is it, O Marzumat?"

"When did it begin with valley people that a man, killing meat, can send a woman to bring in that bird or beast? I ask you when, Blackbeard?"

Blackbeard scratched his head. "I was asleep, O Marzumat! — It was not a freewoman, but a bondwoman."

"Bondwomen are ours, not yours! — O Mao-Tan! a woman to be bidden by a man to do his work and save him trouble! The sky will fall! If it falls or not, O Endar, do that again and valley women will deal with you!"

Saran appeared beside them. "She is angry," explained Endar, "because I bade one of those mountain women do

a small thing! War-men may bring the meat, but they must not put hand in the pot!"

The outer corners of his eyes moved up, his white teeth flashed, he laughed and stretched his arms. The huge muscles showed.

Marzumat's eyes narrowed. "My heart will not be heavy," she said, "when Mao-Tan gives Endar to the beasts to eat!"

Endar's laughter stopped. He put up his arm and with the fingers of the other hand made a sign in the air. "Do not wish evil upon me! In-Tan hear me say it! I will bring the next bird myself!"

The tree under which he lay edged a grove that stretched toward the stream. Marzumat went away into this and Saran moved with her.

"What harm," said the latter, "if Gilhumat brought the bird that Endar shot? Endar is next to me in the valley."

His tone was sullen. Marzumat stood still. They were in the heart of the grove, out of earshot unless they raised their voices loudly. The people of the valley had hardly as yet developed restraint in quarrel. But something in this man and woman kept them from shouting each at the other, made them prefer the space of trees to the trodden earth by the huts.

"Ah — ah!" said Marzumat. "You have not set Gilhumat, that is bondwoman to women, to do your work. — But you have followed Maihoma when she was sent at twilight to draw water!"

Saran's eyes, too, narrowed. "Is a great war-man not to speak to spoil that he brings?"

"'Spoil'! O Mao-Tan! I wish that you had never brought that 'spoil'!"

"We brought it. You took it."

"You speak the truth! — Mao-Tan, Mao-Tan! I wish that the spoil was back in the mountain!"

"Will you, O Marzumat, send it back?"

Marzumat stood with parted lips. Moments went by, leaves dropped in the grove, a bird flew overhead. Through an opening between the trees showed the huts and in the burning sun the bondwomen grinding at the mills. . . . The woman who, the first day, had called upon her own god to smite the valley people and their children was seen grinding. . . . "They are useful," said Marzumat. "But men are not to bid them work. And men are not, O Saran, to follow them in the twilight when they go to draw water!"

Saran's tanned face paled which was Saran's way of showing anger. "How will you help that, red-haired one? You have strong arms. But will you bind our arms — mine and Endar's? Will the valley women bind the warmen's arms — set them to keeping sheep, away from the huts and the spoil?"

Red flowed over Marzumat's face and throat and breast. "It is in my mind that we might bind many of you!"

"Not so many that the rest could not loose!" Saran stretched out his arm, regarded the play of muscle. "And we have the spears, the shields, the bows and arrows! Men are stronger to fight than women. As for Mao-Tan — Mao-Tan is very strong, but so is In-Tan. In-Tan has grown as strong as Mao-Tan."

Out of the blue had come a flash and thunder, a shock unimaged before. Each stared at the other, each pale, each breathing short. Marzumat broke the silence. "What talk is this? The Ji-Ji, the ill spirits, have taken this

place! . . . And all the same, I warn you, O Saran, not to follow Maihoma by twilight or by sunlight!"

With that she burst from the grove, and went over the shadeless earth, past the succession of huts, to the place where the bondwomen were grinding the corn. She spoke to a woman grinding. "You are bondwoman to women, not to men! Why, then, did you hearken to Endar when he called you, or go bring the bird he had shot?"

Gilhumat shook her hair back from her face, straightened her body from the grinding. "Why? . . . All of you are other-people, hated by Mo-Tal! Bring for Endar? — grind for Marzumat? Where is the difference to Gilhumat?" Her features twitched. "I had rather bring for men than grind for women! Women — women who bind their own hands and eat their own flesh! To do Endar's bidding? — to do Marzumat's bidding? Mo-Tal hear me, it hurts less to do the first!"

Marzumat made as if to strike her. "Do that also," said Gilhumat. "Then weep when evil comes!"

The other withdrew her hand. "I will not strike you for your words, Gilhumat! But if you turn again from the task we set to a task a man sets, I will strike you many times! And what I say to Gilhumat I say to every grinding woman!"

"Say on," said Gilhumat; and with her handstone crushed the grains of corn spread upon the hollowed surface.

That overheated day went by, another day, other days, and all were heated, with clouds that puffed up from the horizon, deceived and went away, leaving the earth unclad and the sun a fire. A number of valley women, working in the morning in a bean-field, observed a war-man of

no great account take a basket of fish from his own shoulders and put it upon those of a bondwoman. That same day Gilhumat was seen to answer Endar's crooked finger and, leaving her grinding, carry for him the bundle of osiers for mending broken shields. This was told to Marzumat, who gave Gilhumat the promised blows. But that did not turn away the Ji-Ji from the place! She left the punished woman, foaming at her from the ground, and as she entered the great hut saw in the dusk, in the distance, Saran with Maihoma.

That night there broke a great thunderstorm. The Ji-Ji might be praised for bringing rain and coolness, but blamed for the most frightening noises and a sky of white fire! For the night the valley group forgot differences within itself and huddled together in mind as huddled the bodies of the sheep in the folds. All to be thought of was the Ji-Ji, and if the upper spirits would hold back the Ji-Ji from all lengths. The Ji-Ji struck down trees and smote one of the cattle pens. The Ji-Ji threw hugely long, crooked spears of white fire and uttered noises that made women and men and children stop eyes and ears. Then at dawn the Ji-Ji went away.

They left the air cool and bright. Old times seemed to come back to the valley, though new times could not be wholly killed either. Old times thought to-day that new times might be held in bounds.

Copper was wanted by the war-men for spear-heads. Copper was dug out of the hills to the south. Half of the war-men went on an expedition to get copper. They were gone a week. Those who stayed at home seemed in a quiet mood, in what, later in time, might be called a spiritual mood. Back of the grove stood a large, rude, booth-like

structure appropriated by valley men to their sole use. Here they kept ritual costumes and here they feathered arrows, and adorned with red and black pigments quiver and shield, and did other work purely pertaining to great hunters whether of beast or man. The men who did not go for copper resorted to this place, returning to the centre at mealtime. Day after day they kept the good mood. The women heard that they were working upon an image of In-Tan. That seemed a good thing to do!

The herdsmen went afar with the flocks, the bondwomen did as they were bid to do, ground the corn and carried the water. Certain of them, like certain of the herdsmen, ceased to make protest outward or inward. Gilhumat said nothing, but kneeling, crushed the grains beneath her handstone. Maihoma carried water from the stream to the huts. She moved slowly, with a body stiff and sore, for Marzumat, the chief woman, had beaten her terribly, as she had beaten Gilhumat. The valley women went about their manifold business, pursued vocation and avocation with a feeling of serenity.

The war-men came back, laden with copper. At the same time came again the heated weather. It seemed also that the Ji-Ji had only been asleep. . . .

After five days of heat and Ji-Ji in an awakened condition, things changed again. One of the larger flocks, grazing far to the west, wandered out of the valley upon a plain behind the chain of hills. Here a band of other-men fell upon them. There had been three herdsmen. Two were slain. The third, a swift-foot, escaping, won back to the valley with the news.

The war-men who had gone for copper and the war-men who had stayed at home went out, swift-foot, to the west,

out of the valley, through the hills to the plain. It was a small, newly arrived group that they found there, a wretched cluster of huts, wattle and dab, with little more in the way of possessions than the stolen flock. But the men and the women fought like wolves. Even the children bit and tore. But the group was very small.

The valley men killed and those they did not kill they bound. Fighting over, they ransacked the place, but found little spoil beyond their own recovered flock. Only in one hut they found jars filled with a fermented drink new to them and stronger than the drink the valley made.

The weather was hot and dry. The mood of the copper-digging and of the making of In-Tan's image was passed. The struggle-lust and delight in killing, the more complex delight of binding fast the unslain, was over with for the time. Victory had slaked thirst for revenge. The goods were back with usury. The minds of the valley men were for the moment empty. They sat upon the earth and lifted to their lips the jars of drink.

It seemed to the valley men that their minds enlarged. There came to them from In-Tan, or perhaps only from Ji-Ji, a blissful sense of power and daring. They were such great war-men!

The captives remained bound in a space between the huts. The two or three men among them were those who, in the face of odds, had thrown down their weapons. The rest — the women — had fought to the end, but had been encumbered by the children. Now the children were dead, those two or three weaker men cowed. But the women reviled from their bonds. It was shameful that they should thus revile such great war-men, favourites of gods and Ji-Ji!

They looked at the women over the rims of the jars of drink. They had not looked so at the women of the purple mountain, the women they had taken to the women of the valley for a gift. But it seemed a long time since that day! Points of view must change in a changing world. . . . The hot weather and the Ji-Ji and the drink — never the little light man in the heart falling asleep while the little dark man stirred and grew. . . . The war-men began to reason, and it seemed to them that they reasoned loftily. The world was divided into one's own people and other-people to whom nothing was owed. In-Tan certainly and probably Mao-Tan approved the division. Now, women — own-group women and other-women. . . . Certainly own-group women chose absolutely when they would pair and with whom they would pair. That was order-of-nature. No one questioned it. . . . But these other-group women. . . . If you could make war with other-women — if you could kill them — if you could bind them to their own door-posts — if you could take them for bondwomen to grind corn and carry water . . . What else might you not do if you were sure that order-of-nature would not rise and blast you? Casuists sprang up and inner and outer arguing against any such abstractions as natural sanctities. The war-men tilted the jars of drink and found that the liquor helped to free them from abstractions. It gave them fire, it added height on height to their courage. It helped them to questions such as "For what, then, was greater strength given?" and "Do sanctities apply to the conquered?" It helped to the answers and the answers were according to their desires. Saran and Endar were the subtlest disputants. . . . All drank again and the pitchy fire within broke its bounds. Presently

they were quite free from abstractions. They moved toward the other-group women. . . .

The hot night went on. The day came up in a blaze of light.

The war-men quitted the plain and threaded the hills, but they did not carry these women with them. The dead and the yet living, they left behind all of this group. It had been a small, small settlement, seekers of fortune newly arrived in the land. The valley men took with them their own flock and the few beasts that the cluster had owned, but then these could say naught, nor awaken the wrath of Mao-Tan. . . .

They marched back to the valley over parched herbage. The tale that they told to the huts was of a band of robbers who had fought until one and all were slain. . . . As to their greeting from the women of the valley, it was cooler than once it had been. Maihoma was dead. Gilhumat ground corn in silence.

The weather was hot. Mao-Tan and In-Tan were perhaps somewhere in green meadows by waterfalls. But the Ji-Ji liked heat and dryness and a feeling in the air like a singing bow-string. The first day and night went by in a general taciturnity. The second day Saran and Marzumat encountered under a tree by the field of corn.

"Maihoma that is dead was a fair woman," said Saran. He was pale and his nostrils opened and shut.

"So?" said Marzumat. "All of us die, and even fair women."

The two stared each at the other. The sky like fire, and the Ji-Ji active, and man and woman at odds. . . .

The next day held quiet. Most of the men went to the booth behind the grove. Endar, going, said to women in

the bean-field that In-Tan's image occupied them. He said that it was going to be a great In-Tan, twice as tall as a man. They meant to set it up in front of the men's booth, and it would be a great help in keeping women from the place. Endar's black beard moved, and his white teeth flashed, and his eyes crinkled up.

Women, truly, went not to the place, but two, passing at no great distance, heard first Endar and then Saran haranguing, and coming to the fields reported what they had heard. It had not been much, a few shouted-out words, chance-caught. "Lesson. . . . Teach a lesson! . . . Show power, and then have peace!" The women knew no more than that of the harangue. It was to be presumed that the men were talking of raid and foray against other-people.

That day passed. The next day all the war-men went early to the grove and the booth. A woman, weaving, spoke to a woman making baskets. "When I waked at first light, the men were taking spears and clubs to the great booth. I asked what they were doing and they said they were going to make a hunting-dance before the In-Tan they are cutting from a tree."

The sun walked up the sky in a dazzling robe and throwing arrows of heat. Women were in the bean-field and the corn-field. They wove at rude looms. With bone needle and fibre thread they were sewing garments. They were making baskets; they were preparing to fire a rude kiln and bake therein vessels of clay. The meat had been killed for the next meal; they had brought it from the pens, they were quartering and dressing it. They were at work upon this and at work upon that, or they were resting from work. Some were crooning to babes. The bondwomen worked

without being able to say, "Now I shall rest awhile!" The noise of all their industries blended into a steady, droning, humming, not unpleasing sound. Here and there a woman sang, and through the whole fluted the voices of children.

A woman at the loom shaded her eyes with her hands. "The men are under the trees, dressed up to dance." Another looked. "They are coming from under the trees — that's a new dance!" A third, carrying a large jar, stopped to look. "They have their spears and clubs. I see Saran. He has hawk wings bound upon his head. — Ha, you grinding women! They looked that way when they came down upon your huts!" As she strained to look, her grasp upon the jar loosened. It slipped from her hands and broke at her feet in twenty fragments. "Mao-Tan! choke that Ji-Ji!"

The women generally began to observe. Marzumat rose from a stone beside a hut door. The men left the grove. The sun dazzled against their array — she saw Saran with the hawk wings bound upon his head. . . .

Saran and Endar and all the others came across the space between the grove and the huts. They came shouting and swiftly. The women saw their procedure as inconceivable; then, in a moment, the inconceivable became the actual.

While the men used their weapons, their spears and clubs for advantage, they were not used to the uttermost. But they made for advantage, as did muscular strength and training in battle, as did organization, as did prepared attack! Even so, there was for a long time breathless, swaying struggle. The women were not weak-thewed, and behind them stood ancient powers of combat. Furious anger sustained them against the valley men. Man and woman,

old kindnesses, old unities, were forgotten. All grudges were remembered, all separatenesses. They wrestled, they fought, and around all their own noise rose the crying of children.

The war-men had strong advantage, and they had swelled their numbers by the herdsmen. A woman and man, wrestling together, reeled near to the eleven bondwomen where they were gathered by the grinding-stones.

The woman cried, panting. "Gilhumat, you and the others give help!"

Gilhumat's laughter rose and whistled like a storm. "Give you help? *No!* We shall stand still and rest, O women who grind women like corn!"

Marzumat cried to no one. She lifted a great stone, struck Endar Blackbeard with it, and stretched him at her feet. Two war-men came against her, then herdsmen crept up behind and seized her arms. Saran appeared before her, shaking his spear. She foamed at him and his hawk wings.

At last there parted the struggling mass — the men flushed conquerors, the women flung to earth, bruised with clubs, panting, beaten. . . . The men produced a rite which, with some self-pluming, they had devised and rehearsed.

Bondmen drove toward the trodden space sheep from the fold. Saran, the war-head, Endar Blackbeard, and other chief men took bow and arrow, shot strongly, and brought this game to earth. . . . The men were here, the beaten women there, the slain beasts lying beyond the two groups.

Saran stood forth with Endar just behind him. "O valley women, war-men have been hunting, and are tired! —Go you and bring in our game!"

CHAPTER V

WHAT 'S IN A NAME?

VANA lay awake at night pondering how to get riches for her children. Between the middle of the night and morning, not being able to sleep, she rose and stood in the doorway of her house of unburned brick. Mardurbo, the children's father, had riches, but when he died, in a world where descent was counted from mother-side, his riches would go to his brother Kadoumin and other kindred. They would not go to his children because children did not take name nor inherit from fathers, but from mothers. That was order-of-nature, and accepted like the seasons, or sun at day and stars at night. When she, Vana, died, her possessions would go to the five children. Once they would have lapsed to her kindred in entirety — the five children, her sisters and brothers, the children of her sisters, and so on. But now old usage would give what she left chiefly to her nearest kin, and they were the children of her body. Her children would have her riches, such as they were, because over the earth, in her tribe and in all the tribes she had ever heard of, descent was reckoned from women. By the same token they would not have Mardurbo's wealth.

It was all right as long as women had in the world the most wealth! — If she had much riches and Mardurbo little, she would not be standing here wrinkling her brow and not even seeing the round moon behind the juniper trees and the well and the cluster of sheep astray. It was

right enough where there was equal wealth. But Mardurbo was much richer than Vana and growing richer all the time. All men, it seemed to Vana, were growing richer than women. Her lips parted. "They say that once-upon-a-time inside the house was richer than outside . . ."

She stepped without her door upon the crooked, sun-baked street of the town that spread around. Many small houses of unburned brick, lanes and paths, knots of trees, rude, surrounding wall of stake and clay, the place lay still in the bright moonlight. She looked at her own house where she had left her children sleeping, and near them, sleeping too, her three bondwomen. Her house was not larger than another, but she thought with satisfaction of the goods that it contained. She had much household gear and garments and ornaments. In the moonlight she looked at the bracelets upon her arms. They were of silver, and her anklets were of silver. She was a most skilful weaver, and upon his next trading journey Mardurbo would take with him certain webs and bring to her in return earrings and frontlet of gold. She knew, better than any in the town, how to make rich patterns in her weaving, and she had taught her bondwomen. With her work she had bought those women from a trading band coming from the south, and now they worked for her and she sold the cloth they made and the finer stuff that she wove herself. She was richer than most women and the knowledge made her proud. And still Mardurbo was the richest. And when he died all that he had would go to his kindred, and his children would have naught of it.

The moon might have said to her: "It will be long before you die. You are young yet — you and Mardurbo." That was true, but often persons died before they were old.

Mardurbo went afar, trading in towns afar. Robber bands might attack his company — a rival trader might creep in and slay him — he might come to a tribe that believed in seizing goods and giving death in return — he might eat of poison, grow sick and die — as he crossed desert places a lion might spring! He would die and flock and herd and drove, sheep and ass, ox and horse, and all his bondmen, bronze and iron and silver, weapons and well-made garments and ornaments — all, all go to his kindred! She felt bitter toward that kindred, and bitter toward Mardurbo.

Especially she hated that Kadoumin should have Mardurbo's wealth.

She stared at the moon above the juniper trees. It was like a silver shield. She wished that she had such a shield. She wished that she could weave silver and gold, and purchase many more bondwomen than three or seven or ten, and with them weave further in gold and silver and purchase more to weave more. One field she possessed, and she wished that she might make that one two and then set the two to breeding fields. She wished for sheep and oxen and wagons, asses and swift horses — wished to trade afar like Mardurbo and make quick increase. She had in her an able trader — a trader like Mardurbo. Vana drew a sharp breath. Win increase for the name of riches and for the children — for the children — for the children! So they would be great and proud in the tribe. "O my children!" she said; "Kadoumin who is already rich will reap, though he has not sowed, while the children of Mardurbo walk without the field. O my children! the field that I sow for you is not so great — no, not by many measures!"

She stood in the doorway until the moon rose high, then

within the house threw herself down upon her bed of dressed skins and strove to sleep. But it was become an obsession — that thought of riches. She could not sleep. The bondwomen breathed deep in the inner room. A ray of moonlight entering struck upon the looms where they and Vana worked. Mardurbo was away — Mardurbo was journeying toward a town that would trade metals for horses such as Mardurbo bred, and for weapons that the men of his tribe made and webs that the women wove. Vana saw Mardurbo journeying. Ordinarily her feeling for him was a curious one, half fond, half estranged. She divined that he had for her a like feeling. At times they were as close as hand and hand, allied as two strings of Saba's harp. The very next day might fall a misliking, dark and cold as iron in winter. Coming thus, sometimes it worked with one emotion, sometimes with another.

The moon paled, the pink dawn came, the trees rustled in the morning breeze. The town awoke. Without the wall shepherds and herdsmen moved with their charges far upon the plain. The light strengthened, cocks crowed, dogs barked, there arose spirals of smoke, voices conversed and called and sang. The morning meal was toward. Women and men renewed their work. Tones of children and pattering feet of children made a song of spring.

Without the wall spread fields of wheat and barley, of millet and of flax. Women and men went to the fields. Outside, too, slid a slow, murmuring brook. Women washed here, and on the banks in the sun women bleached webs that women wove. And near by, in a shady place, they had vats where they dyed their webs. Without the wall was the clayey place where bricks were made and dried and here also was a rude rope-walk. Men and women

made brick, and cords and rope, though more men than women. But within the wall women moved in the greatest number and here the industries were chiefly theirs. And again, where men worked, without wall or within wall, they were, with some exceptions, the slower, the gentler, the older, the less strong of body among men. These, and bondmen, of whom there were many. Gone from the town were trading bands, and a war-band raiding the tents of trespassers, and a hunting band. At home, however, stayed Dardin the magic-man and his sons, and Saba the harp-player, and Kadoumin the wily, and others. But all the women stayed in the town or in the fields just without — the strong and the young women with the old and the weak, the skilled with the dull, the adventurous with the sluggish, those without children with those who had children, branching natures with sheathed natures, travelling minds with rooted minds. Kamilil the magic-woman said that once women wandered abroad like men. Not just like men, for there were always the children, but yet wandered and hunted and fought. But few really believed Kamilil. As things were, so must they always have been!

Vana went to see Bardanin her brother. She took with her her eldest son, a boy straight as a reed, strong as a master bow, and handsome as a deer of the hills. As they went through the lanes of the town all remarked the two. Vana herself had "looks." Moreover, none failed of knowing how skilful she was and richer than most. Every one knew every one else, and what they did and how they did it.

Bardanin was a hunter. He lived in a house by the wall, and he had just returned with his son Targad from hunting

in the hills that bordered the plain. They had brought two antelope and had cast them down upon the ground beneath a tree. Vana found Bardanin and Targad seated beside the house door, between them a bowl of lamb's flesh and a platter of barley cakes. They welcomed her and she sat down near them. While they ate she watched the women of the household lift and shoulder the game beneath the tree and carry it to the open-air place of all work behind the house.

Said Bardanin: "Hunting is not what it used to be. — Mardurbo has not returned?"

"No. He was going to the people between the rivers and the people by the sea. He will gather handful and armful. . . . Bardanin, my brother, it is hard that this boy and the four I have left at home will not have Mardurbo's wealth when he dies!"

Bardanin broke a barley cake. "The five will have your wealth — and it is known that you gather by the handful!"

"What matters that when Mardurbo gathers by the armful? Mardurbo will be the richest man between the hills and the sea. Why should Kadoumin who has twelve fields have Mardurbo's wealth?"

"Kadoumin is his brother."

"Bardanin, I know that! But I ask are not his children nearer to Mardurbo than is Kadoumin?"

Bardanin stared at his sister. He was a great hunter, but a slow mind. Targad laughed. Bardanin drank from a pitcher of milk, then set the vessel down thoughtfully. "Nearer in his liking," said Bardanin. "Just as I like Targad and his brothers and sisters more than I like my own brothers and sisters. But if the lion that we met had slain

me my goods would belong to my kindred. Targad and the others take their mother's goods."

"You are unsorrowing, Bardanin, because you have so little!"

"That may be true," said Bardanin. "When you gather riches you think more, but you sleep less."

"It is true that I have not slept," said Vana. "Mardurbo's riches should come to Mardurbo's children."

"There are always good reasons for things being as they are," answered Bardanin, and stretched his arms, for he had lost sleep in the hills.

Vana went to see her sister Lonami. Lonami lived in the street of the well, and it being now afternoon the two, sitting upon the doorstep, could watch a procession of women bringing pitchers and jars and water-skins for filling against the night.

Said Lonami: "Have you finished the web with the purple border?"

"Not yet."

"Any chief will give you oxen for it. — I make a patterned web myself, but it is not like yours."

"Lonami, men journey and make war. They take all manner of cattle and trade for what they do not take. The sheep and cattle, the asses and horses, breed fast, and they have great flocks and herds. Then they trade with these, and always it grows! Men say that theirs are the metals that come out of the earth. How big the earth is I do not know, nor when she gave them the copper and silver and iron! They go to war and bring back rich and strange things and many bond-folk. A woman must weave much cloth or dye many webs, or make many pots or baskets, or plant much grain before she can buy a bondman or a

bondwoman. Men grow richer than women, and that to me is like a cloud in the sky when the brook is already flooding!"

"It is true enough!" said Lonami.

"I think of my children! If I die, what do I leave them? A field and three bondwomen, a house and its gear and a few webs of cloth! But Mardurbo dies, and what is not taken by Kadoumin!"

"Harran is not rich like Mardurbo," said Lonami, "as I am not rich like you, Vana! Yet I would that Harran's great bow and his bronze-handled long knife might go to Eninumo his son! Harran would so, too, — and Eninumo."

"I knew that you would understand! When no one was richer than any one else, it did not matter. But now it matters — if you wish your children to go fine in the world!"

"I do not see that anything can be done about it," said Lonami.

Vana looked at her out of dark eyes beneath dark-red hair. "There are long reasons why one makes patterns in cloth that is woven and one makes them not!"

That night she watched the moon again. The next morning she went to Kadoumin's house where it was told her that Kadoumin was in the barley-fields. Vana betook herself to the fields, moving swiftly, with a clinking of silver anklets. Kadoumin, mounted upon an ass, was watching five bondmen reaping the field with sickles of iron.

"A bounteous day, Vana!" said Kadoumin.

"A bounteous to Kadoumin!" answered Vana, her eyes travelling down the swathes.

Kadoumin dismounted from his ass and sat in the shade

of a tree and Vana sat beside him. "I had a dream of Mardurbo," said Kadoumin. "He was by the sea and he had a jar which he dipped into the wave. When it was filled he emptied it upon a tent cloth spread beside him, and the water was not water, but earrings of gold and pieces of silver as large as your fist. It seems to me a lucky dream!"

"A lucky dream for you, Kadoumin, who when Mardurbo dies will get the gold and silver, the tent cloth and the jar!"

Kadoumin regarded the barley-fields. "I am an older man than Mardurbo. He is more like to get my fields from me. — It is true, however, that he trades in dangerous places."

"He has a charm against deaths. — I was not in earnest when I said 'A lucky dream for you!' for Mardurbo is marked for long life."

Kadoumin, who ailed inwardly and showed an outward leanness, made a sign for health that Dardin the magic-man had taught him. As he did so he looked aslant at his visitor. "Istara, Mardurbo's mother and mine, was killed by a falling beam, but Matara, her mother, lived long, and Matara's mother, Innannu, very long. — It is a good barley year, Vana of the silver anklets! Is it a good year for weaving and for purple dyeing?"

"It is good, Kadoumin. — I have a web with a purple border made like the vine, and another with a yellow pattern like a wheel, and another that is fine and white as mist over the brook. — Would you have them?"

"A free gift or in trade, Vana, mother of the five fairest children?"

"Kadoumin, the stars and next year are very well, but the wise man considers the field before him. — For the

three webs — seeing that Mardurbo is the younger man and should outlive — will you, witnesses sitting by, give over to Mardurbo's children Mardurbo's goods when he dies?"

Kadoumin took up a stalk of barley and drew it between his lips. "Mardurbo is a rich man. Three webs, even though their like was never seen, weight light against sheep and oxen and Mardurbo's swift horses."

"You know that field I have by the brook. I would add it to the webs."

Kadoumin drew the barley stalk again between his lips. "Why do you consider the stars and next year?"

"I know not, but I do. — Children, children — men do not know how that feels!"

"I left the town at first light. Perhaps a swift runner has come with news that the tribe by the sea or a lion out of the forest has slain Mardurbo?"

"By Air the goddess, no!" said Vana.

"Then I will think," said Kadoumin, "of what you say until Mardurbo returns. — Dardin has taught me, too, a great spell that gives long life."

Vana in her turn looked at him aslant. "It does not show — that spell. The webs are fair and the field joins yours. Better the lowing of one heifer before the door than the seeing of herds in the clouds of the sky!"

"I will think," said Kadoumin, "of what you say until Mardurbo's return. If there were more advantage yet . . ." He seemed to fall to dreaming. "Mardurbo, I know not why, is fonder of children than of brothers. I have no children and so I know not why. . . . Mardurbo might add to the webs and the field. . . . If all the men in town and plain — and all the women — would agree, all men might leave their goods to their own children."

Vana struck her hands together. "Kadoumin the wise! I have thought that, lying on my bed at night! But I thought that it was my thought only, and it seemed to me too strange to tell!"

Kadoumin drew the barley stalk through his hands. "The matter is one of kindred, and there is no rope like kindred, and no bull with its strength!"

"Nearly all have children. Children are loved more than are sisters and brothers. It is wise to lay a gift upon the ground if thereby you take two from the tree!"

"I have no children."

"So we make you the webs and the field and what Mardurbo will give!"

Kadoumin laid down the barley stalk, and the sun being at height and the reapers coming to the tree, got slowly to his feet. "You see much with your eyes, Vana, maker of fine webs! but there is, in this matter, something down the lane and beside the wall. . . . I do not clearly see what it is myself, but it is there. . . . I shall go talk to Dardin the magic-man."

Vana went to Kamilil the magic-woman, taking with her a gift. Kamilil lived near the gate in the wall, in a very clean house with two daughters to care for it. She smiled when any one spoke to her of Dardin and said that many made magic, but that few made it well.

Vana gave her present of two hens into the daughters' hands and sat down at Kamilil's feet. The daughters went away.

Kamilil was spinning wool. "Do you come for magic, Vana, rich in many ways?"

"Mother Kamilil," said Vana, "mothers want more

magic than most! — I lie awake at night to think how to make my children rich and great!"

"They must do some of that themselves," said Kamilil, and put red wool upon her distaff.

"Yes," said Vana, but still she thought that she could do it for them. "Mother Kamilil, is there a magic to make all men, no less than all women, desire to leave their goods when they die to their children?"

"A weak magic will do that," answered Kamilil, "seeing that in their hearts most men desire it now."

"Then is there a magic to make every man's kindred ready to give over claiming when he dies and the children stand forth?"

Kamilil span and span. "There is the magic that you see that what you do for others others will do for you."

"So!" said Vana. "Give me a magic, Kamilil, that shall make all this tribe see that!"

Kamilil leaned back from her spinning. "That is a greater thing than I thought you came about. . . . That means to think of many children and many years and many men and women!"

"Yes," said Vana. "How can it hurt children to have fathers as well as mothers leave to them?"

Kamilil fingered the red strands. "Change spreads. . . . When a river is in its bounds you know what you have to do with. You say, 'It waters this field — it flows by these trees.' Flood comes — that is, change — and you say, 'Where are its banks?' Throw a stone into a great pool. A little ring — a wider ring — a wider yet! As great as is the pool, so far the rings widen. That is change. . . . There is something in this that you talk about that I do not see clearly. To-night I will gather plants, and to-morrow I will

brew from them, and in the smoke I shall see — I shall see — I shall see . . ."

Her distaff twirled faster. "Come to me three days hence," she said, and called to her daughters to bring Vana honey cakes and wine.

Vana went home and brooded over what Kadoumin and Kamilil had said. A day and night passed and she determined to go to see Uduma, who lived by herself. That was to leave the town and follow the brook until it narrowed and you reached a cypress wood. Vana tied a measure of wheat in a square of fine cloth, and taking a staff in her hand set forth.

Uduma was one that was held in awe. Vana, as she went up the brook, thought first of her own fishing and the nets she was flinging over the future, then, the wood growing deep and the air darkly pure, her mood changed. She seemed to remember many things; only they were all blended, merged, fused. What came from it seemed to be a light-touched sadness, a chained and bound longing. Vana sighed, and used energy to overcome that mood.

The trees grew thickly, the gliding water talked to itself. Vana thought of offences against gods and goddesses, sprites and ministers. She made in the air Kamilil's sign to banish evil and beckon good, and pursued her journey with a quickened step.

Before her broke a sunny space and here, in the midst, was the hut, round and low, of Uduma the seer, and Uduma herself seated on a stone, and near her an ewe and her lamb.

Vana stood still. "Hail, Uduma!"

Uduma turned. "Hail, woman! Come within the sunny ring."

Vana came, and laid before the seer the wheat wrapped in fine cloth. "Gift from one who would gain knowledge!"

"It is only to be gained," said Uduma, "by those who would gain it. — The wheat is good and the cloth is fine. Sit in the sun and rest from the shadows."

Vana sat, cross-limbed, upon the short grass. Uduma became silent, and Vana, as was manners, held as quiet. The sun poured down its rays, but the dry and aromatic air was in motion, and the heat not oppressive. The light burned clear gold over the open round, the small hut and the deep, surrounding wood. Time passed.

At last said Uduma the seer: "To love children of one's body is well. To think for children of one's body is well. To hold the flower of the vine before the eyes is well. But it is not well to hide therewith earth and the ripened grape, the moon, the sun, and the stars."

"O Uduma!" said Vana, "we are all flower of the vine for so many years that we live! Will it not be well for all to take goods from our fathers as well as our mothers?"

"I do not say that it will not be well. . . . Observe my ewe and her lamb. See, wherever she turns, the lamb turns with her."

Vana nodded. "She is all the lamb's good."

"You say well. — But now if the ram came and made magic so that the lamb got much good from him and then more good and more? Would the lamb any more look wholly to the ewe?"

Vana sat with an arrested look in the sunny round. At last she spoke. "Fathers as well as mothers have praise from children. . . . I do not know — I do not remember — if it was ever otherwise."

"Praise, but not so great praise."

"When the people from the hills came against us, four barley harvests since, and broke down the wall and poured through the ways and struck against the houses, Mardurbo fought mightily in our doorway. I also fought, but Mardurbo fought with great blows. Did not the children praise him then?"

"Yes. Were the ram and the ewe and the lamb together, in a close place, and there came a dog, the ram would fight mightily, and for the ewe and the lamb as for himself. And if he is hurt the ewe will fight for him, as always for the lamb. And doubtless in its heart the lamb praises the ram, and another day, if there comes a dog or a wolf, it looks to the ram as to the ewe to fight for it. . . . All that is true, and there is praise now in the earth from children to fathers. But the food is the continuing life, and the warmth is the continuing life, and the taking of care is the continuing life. . . . The lamb turns with the ewe."

Vana sat still. The light came down clear and dry. It might be seen why Uduma liked this place. "If the ram has food to give, and garments for richness and warmth, and fields for gain and pleasantness — "

"While it is very little the lamb will yet turn with the ewe."

Vana sat cross-limbed, her eyes upon the earth. A great bird passed overhead; she knew it by its shadow on the ground. "This it was that crossed Kadoumin's mind and the mind of Kamilil, but neither could gain its shape!" She sat still, in the dry light, but she was not wholly accustomed to that light — by no means wholly accustomed to that light. Not even Uduma was that.

"What else?" asked Vana at last, and she spoke in a dulled and weary voice.

"If the ram can do all that," said Uduma, "if the lamb at last turns with him, then the ewe must seek her gain elsewhere."

Vana beat her hands together. "There is no gain elsewhere!"

"I have not dug deep enough nor built high enough," said Uduma, "to find out about that. And this is all that I can tell you now of the matter, for the eyes with which I see grow tired."

Vana took ceremonious leave of Uduma. She went out of the still and sunny round into the wood where the day murmured and was dim under roof, above roof, and down the stream where the clay thickened and coloured the water. As she went her mind was torn within her, and she saw, as it were arising in the wood before her, Mardurbo making wealth, and her own loom and the web within and her field and three bondwomen, and afterwards the five children, and how they grew, and the little she would have for each. Vana's children, and they should go in purple through the town. . . . This talk of ewes and women — and who ever saw a lamb turn from its dam or children turn from women?

Mardurbo — Mardurbo! Vana walked slowly, sat down at last upon the stream bank. The five bending toward Mardurbo — Mardurbo demanding from the five since he fought and was strong, and besides was going to make them rich — Mardurbo's favour, Mardurbo's disfavour — in the children's eyes Mardurbo the waxing moon and she the waning — Vana drew sharp breath, struck at the air with her staff. "Fly, bad dream!" she said. But it would not avoid — it seemed to come toward her, between the trees, the strongest in fight and the richest — ! Vana

uttered a strangling cry. "Mardurbo! I know not if I wish life for you!"

She stared at the dark trees and the dark places between them. Slowly there rose in her mind Mardurbo as she had known him first — Mardurbo and she as striplings amid the wheat and the vines — Mardurbo before they came into the same house; and afterwards for a time, before the eldest boy was born, and the two years of her suckling him — Mardurbo before the days of the bondwoman whom he bought and to whom he gave a house. . . . Mardurbo and Vana, striplings among the wheat and the vines. Slow tears rose in Vana's eyes. "Mardurbo! Mardurbo!" she breathed.

She took up her staff, rose to her knees and then to her feet, and went on down the stream to the clay-built town. And here, even outside the wall, she heard that Mardurbo had come home.

The men who told her exaggerated the wealth Mardurbo had brought. According to them it was exceeding much — in metals, in cattle and bondmen, in stuffs and weapons and tools to work with, in salt, in ornaments of silver, and all such matters! Mardurbo had come with a train — now the cattle were stalled without the wall, and the other goods heaped beside and within the house. To-morrow and the next day and the next Mardurbo would hold market. Horses were what were wanted in exchange.

Inside the wall Vana still heard of that much wealth the trader had brought. It seemed that the people by the sea had been hungry for horses. The town was excited over Mardurbo's return.

Approaching her own house, she saw in the distance that goods were, indeed, heaped beside it and before it, and

Mardurbo in the midst of his men directing the goods' bestowal, and children and bondwomen and a number of town-folk watching. Sound came to her in a gush, and a perception as of bees at work. Her hand closed hard upon her staff. The honey — all the honey — to go to Kadoumin and the other kindred!

The children saw her and ran to her, the bondwomen saw her and snatched up distaff or water-jar. Mardurbo turned from sacks of salt and goods in bales that the people by the sea traded with. He came through the press to Vana as she came through it to him.

"Ha, woman!" cried Mardurbo. "I am back alive!"

Vana put her hands upon his. They drew each to each, with suddenness they embraced. Each felt, each showed a rude, a passionate fondness. "Glad I am that you live!"

"I have brought the fairest earrings and frontlet —"

Their hold each of the other loosened. Manners of the tribe demanded restraint in the open in love-tokens. But their faces still shone. Then the shining lessened, and there dropped between, neither knew from where, the sundering force.

"Wealth and wealth!" said Vana. "Kadoumin dreamed that he saw you dipping riches from the sea!"

"Kadoumin! . . . I have brought a gift for each of the children."

A bale threatened falling. Mardurbo lifted it on strong shoulders, bore it to the room for storing built beside the main room. Bondmen followed, carrying much goods. The children chattered like monkeys, the watching town-folk, men and women, made admiration or offered help; over the place played red sunshine of the shutting day. Largely the gathered crowd were Mardurbo's kindred. Vana stood

still. In times before to-day assuredly she would have laid hand to matters herself, lifted and borne and called her bondwomen to the task. But now she saw Vana and her children one kindred, and Mardurbo with Kadoumin and the others one kindred, and between strangeness. She would not help put away Kadoumin's goods — but lightly she would have helped to put away goods of the five children! Desire of riches that had trembled toward departure, came back and held her with full force. Standing in the bronze light, she knew covetousness — she knew hatred of Kadoumin and the other kindred — knew for that moment hatred of Mardurbo. Stronger, stronger! — richer, richer! — and how could she take the children with her, going trading to make them rich? . . . Those who spoke to her she answered shortly, standing in a brown study, then went into the house and, calling her women, fell to preparing supper.

The meal was over. Mardurbo's followers gone away, the precious, the weighty things that he had brought home bestowed against further trading. Reclined upon an ox-skin spread without the door, Mardurbo watched the five children at play with other children in the pinky, twilight street. They ran up and down, they joined hands and swung in circles, they played at hunting and at war, stalking and capturing one another. Then they played the tribe by the sea and the tribe in the hills and Mardurbo with his horses trading from the plain to the hills and the sea. The children of Vana and Mardurbo claimed to play Mardurbo. It seemed that their claim was good. But other children set up shrill objection, put in an opposing claim. Mardurbo was their kinsman. Contention arose. "Mardurbo is our father!" — "Mardurbo is our kin!" — "He lives

with us!" — "Ho! If he and your mother part he will come back to grandmother's house!" — "He brought us presents!" — "Ho! your presents are only little bits! All the big things belong to kin! We've got horses and bondmen and salt and copper and silver!" — "Anyhow, we're Mardurbo!" — "*No*, you are n't! We're Mardurbo!"

Mardurbo turned on his ox-skin. "What does a man toil and journey for? Kadoumin, and the children of Istara?"

Twilight deepened, earth faced night. The town went to sleep — all save prowling dogs and winged or creeping things of the dark, and human folk in pain of body or of mind. Vana and Mardurbo lay awake. They heard the children's breathing and the breathing of the bondwomen and of Mardurbo's men who slept at the door of the treasure chamber. Mardurbo turned again.

Vana spoke. "Did you have your fill of sleeping between here and the sea?"

"I slept little upon this journey. There were many to watch against."

Vana rose from that couch of skins. "Whether one goes or stays there are many to watch against. . . . A lion and a lioness and their cubs . . ."

"What put that into your heart?" asked Mardurbo.

"I do not know. . . . How large is the heart, seeing that everything finds room?" She moved from the couch to the door, stood upon the threshold and looked at the town asleep.

Mardurbo followed her. "I want to talk. In there the others will waken."

Vana let fall behind them the mat that made the door. She sat down upon the threshold step, and Mardurbo

beside her. The breathing was now withdrawn. In front of them lay the hot, still night with nothing moving save a dog by a distant wall.

"I should have drunk sweetness upon this journey," said Mardurbo, "but instead I have drunk bitterness. — Why should not my riches go to my children?"

"Why not? Why not?"

"Saba the harp-player says, and all men know, that women are seen to be mothers of their children. But men are not seen to be fathers. So we count from our mothers, knowing that we are theirs. Men must take it from women that they are fathers. It is 'faith,' like 'faith' when we ask from the Powers."

"Do you not know that the five are yours and mine? They are yours and mine."

"I have 'faith,'" answered Mardurbo.

"It is evil for Kadoumin and for Istara and her children to have wealth that should be our children's! How to change that — how to make magic that shall change that —!"

"I know a way," said Mardurbo. "It came to me in the desert while I lay awake. Just like a falling star it fell into my heart!"

"What is it, Mardurbo? What is it?"

Mardurbo looked at the sky and around at the silent town. He made upon the earth at his feet one of Dardin's signs. He was a bold man, but change is a difficult thing in the world, and what is now has all the honour and observance! "Count kindred another way," said Mardurbo, and he dropped his voice yet lower and looked somewhat fearfully at his companion. "Have a great council of the tribe and determine it! Let children come into father's kindred."

"How can that work?" asked Vana. "How can they be reckoned of fathers' kin when already they are of mothers' kin, and the two kins are separate?"

Mardurbo traced another sign upon the earth. "Take them from mother-kin and put them in father-kin."

Vana's lips moved. "Is that your way?"

"It came as though there were light all around it — or as though you ate up the desert on the swiftest horse. It seemed so hard, and then it seemed so easy! Everything to stay as it is," said Mardurbo, "save that, after the council, children take name from father-side. Name makes kindred — when men die kindred take their goods."

Vana's breath came quick and thin. "Do you think the folk will agree to that?"

"Men will agree quickly," said Mardurbo the trader.

"The men — the men! But the women —"

"Men grow richer than women, for the outside is bigger than the inside of the house. You wish the five to have my riches when I die. Lonami wishes Eninumo to have the goods of Harran. Innina wishes her three to have the flocks of Akarnad. It will be so with other women."

"*Children to go from mother-kin into father-kin —*"

"Still they would be your children — as now they are my children — and yet I have no honour from them, and when my kindred gather to a feast they come not with them!"

"*I give them no longer my name, nor the name of my mother!*"

Mardurbo was deep in love with the plan that had fallen like the shooting star. He struck the threshold stone. "What harm to women if they take name from fathers instead of from mothers?"

"If they take name from men!"

"To this night," said Mardurbo, "men have taken name from women."

"I go to see Kamilil," said Vana.

She went when the sun was pushing above the plain. Kamilil was already twisting red wool, while in the rear of the house the daughters sang like birds. "Mother Kamilil," said Vana, "what did you see in the smoke of the plants you gathered?"

"I saw," said Kamilil, "that there is much restlessness in life, and that when gain perches on one person's shoulder it has not come out of nothing, but has flown from the shoulder of another. . . . Cease thinking of great riches for your children after you."

"That I cannot do," said Vana. "My children are my dear life."

"Then the bird," said Kamilil, "will fly from your shoulder to Mardurbo's shoulder. — And that is all that I saw in the smoke from the plants."

Vana, returning home, found Mardurbo and the bondmen establishing booths for the market. Ordinarily she would have given great help, but to-day there was abstraction in her gaze.

Mardurbo came to her where she stood. "Every one will be here to trade or to look. I will speak to the elders about the council."

"Say nothing until I return," said Vana. "I am going to see Uduma the seer."

She left the town wall behind her, and followed the winding of the brook, walking with a silver tinkling of her anklets. Presently she found again the clear, sunny space, and Uduma carding wool.

"Hail, Uduma!"

"Hail, woman-who-was-here-yesterday!"

Vana sat upon the grass before Uduma. "Uduma, Uduma! the lamb must take the name of the ram as well as his riches!"

Uduma, who had put by her carding sat with her eyes upon a bright place in the sky. She sat very still, her body unbowed, her hands folded in her lap. "Uduma, Uduma! if the lamb learns to say, 'I am son or daughter of the ram' — and thinks nothing of the ewe —"

Uduma still looked at the bright sky. Time went by. The place was golden, warm and dry, and possessed an aromatic breath. The breath seemed to come slow-drawn, and Uduma's breath the same. At last she spoke. "I see what I had not seen. . . . For a long, long time, for a long, long time, the lamb thought all of the ewe and nothing of the ram. . . . The wind goes to and the wind goes fro. The summer is, and then the winter is. The day is, and then the night is. The winter is, and then the summer is. The night is, and then the day is."

"The two," said Vana, "are evened in night-and-day and summer-and-winter."

"There is more wisdom in you," said Uduma, "than shows every day! Why do you give milk to pride and greed?"

"I do not so. I give milk to my children."

"Pride-for-children and greed-for-children are long names for short things."

Vana with her long, embrowned fingers moved her silver anklets. "O Uduma, will not Mardurbo remember that, for the children, I let the council be called, and said in my turn, 'Change the old ways'?"

"Mardurbo — Mardurbo! Look in your own heart for Mardurbo and his thoughts!"

"Will we make evil, O Uduma, changing the old? If there were evil to tribe-women, would Istal, the Mother of the gods, let me make it?"

"Look in your heart for tribe-women, and look in your heart for Istal! . . . You will do what you will do, and there will come out of it what there will come out of it. As for me, I am a watcher, but my eyes are not very good. I do not know what the gods wish — And now I am tired, and I will speak no more, woman-who-came-yesterday!"

Vana left the golden-lighted circle and went through the dark wood, down the falling stream. As on yesterday she had thought of Mardurbo, so to-day she thought of Mardurbo. But first she said, and said it thrice, "I do not believe that I shall be less in the world by this one and that one saying 'Mardurbo's children!' — Who is it that knows not that they are my children? — It will be nothing but a saying!" For since yesterday she was the more set to gain for the five those riches from the seashore and the country between the hills.

Mardurbo — Mardurbo! To-day she felt affection for Mardurbo. She was glad that no lion had felled him with a stroke, and no serpent crept into his tent, and no man-foe sent arrow against him. Mardurbo loved the children as she did, and he would make for them wealth and more wealth. It was not much of a price to pay — to say "son of Mardurbo — daughter of Mardurbo!" Especially when it would be naught but a saying. The tribe would continue to know that Vana had borne them in agony, had suckled them and wrought for them, day and night. Mardurbo . . . Mardurbo! To-morrow she might again feel

anger against him, desire to see him gone, and care not for his dangers. To-day, all was as oil and wine. The will of Vana was set to obtain that turning of wealth from Kadoumin and from Istara and her children to the five in the house of the loom. To feel for any cause violence and bitterness against Mardurbo would make difficulties more difficult, and therefore she felt it not.

The sun was in the west when she reëntered the town, and the greater part of the town hovered yet about Mardurbo's market. The town fed desire with strange, precious goods, and gave to Mardurbo in exchange home-made matters. Home-made matters seeming nothing like so precious, the town's giving outweighed its taking. Mardurbo would have much of fine and precious with which to feed the desire of the people by the sea and the people between the rivers, who in turn would outweigh that much with their homely, home-furnished matters. So Mardurbo prospered. And much to his liking were the horses that the plain now gave him.

So he knew satisfaction, and the men and women of his town knew satisfaction. A rich and expansive mood pervaded the place of the booths. Except for a few scattering thrusts trading, that had gone on since dawn, was over. Covetousness, fed, rested with sleepy, half-shut lids. Minds that, as each had thought, had shrewdly bargained, relaxed tension. Saba the harp-player sat against a wall and made music to tread the harp's stretched chords. Dardin the magic-man had, in return for his spells bringing health and successful trading, a great dish of bronze. With it in his hands he looked at the noble sickle that Kadoumin the wily had bought with a brown foal. Bardanin the hunter had shoes that would tread thorns like gods, and

Targad had a painted quiver and baldric. Harran had a silver armlet. Lonami had given her greatest web for an ewer and dish of well-wrought metal, Istara had an ivory spindle made by the people between the rivers, and the daughters of Kamilil had garments dyed and fashioned by the seashore folk. The town made a deep, contented, murmurous sound.

Mardurbo rested near Saba the harp-player. He looked at the horses in the staked enclosure the bondmen had made, and he thought of other steeds that he was to examine in the morning before the change goods left his hands. The people by the sea were lean with hunger for horses. He looked at a row of new bondmen, and he looked at goods that his town made, piled like tall anthills. Mardurbo sat embrowned, weary and satisfied, still observed by the town, granted to be the greatest trader, and good beside in war or council.

Vana, making her way to him, met likewise with observance. Vana and Mardurbo . . . Mardurbo and Vana!

Vana stood beside him. "Let us speak now to the elders, and let them call the folk to council to-morrow." Her hand rested on the head of the eldest of the five, the boy straight as a reed, strong as a master bow, and handsome as a deer of the hills. "Mardurbin, when he goes trading, shall have somewhat to begin with!"

They spoke, and when men and women understood the subject-matter there lacked no interest. The grass was dry fuel for the dropped fire.

There stood in the middle of the town a council-tree, huge of bole, many-branched and forest-leaved. Beneath it the tribe had held council since the days of the far-back mother from whom it took origin and name. The day that

followed the market they held the council here. The elders sat around the trunk of the tree, and about these the chief men and women and the others in their degrees made larger and larger rings.

All the chief men and women spoke, and some spake twice. All day that council held, a council to be marked by the tribe, in their annals of the earth, with a stone and a pillar and an altar smoke. When it began the eastern side of the tree was golden, when it ended the western.

It ended with choice made, with a great number crying out for the choice that was made. A few voices differed from the most, but faintly and more faintly, until they were like distant cicadas. The earth was bondwoman to the voice of the many. At the close of day the law of this tribe was changed. . . . When the eastern side of the tree was gold there held the ancient mother-right; when the western side was gold there came upon the plain father-right.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROPHET

HALMIS liked to sit by the river, among reeds or beneath willows, narrow-leaved and moving with the slenderest breath of Myr the air-sprite. Near her brothers' house, where she lived, there lay among reeds, half drawn from the water, the ruin of a boat. It was a place to sit and think, whether the sun shone or the clouds scudded. Halmis possessed a stringed instrument of music, a thing akin to the lyre. Sometimes she brought this with her to the boat, and played upon it sitting there, hidden by the reeds. Sometimes she sang, her voice rising from the reed bed like a voice of the earth.

Ramiki likewise could make a song and sing it.

Halmis could prophesy; Ramiki likewise.

Each had, beyond the common, perception, memory, imagination, and moving gift of speech. When either recited certain things to the people of the river country, and gave advice or promised good or threatened penalty, it was called prophecy. When what they said came to pass they received great honour; when it failed they said that the time was not yet, but that the people would reach it. Halmis believed in her power. Ramiki believed in his power. While that was so, either was capable at times of inner doubt and unhappiness. But, very largely, they kept that to themselves. That course, they thought, was undeniably wiser, in the world as it was constituted. As for belief in each other's powers, that wavered.

Halmis dwelled by the water-side. Ramiki had his home upon rising land, where he lived with his father in a well-built house guarding field and pasture. The people still thought that the old chief would give the house to Ramiki, keeping a corner for himself, and that Halmis would leave her brothers by the riverside and come into Ramiki's house. Surely it would be advantageous to her to do so!

Halmis and Ramiki also thought, many times, that they would put hand in hand before witnesses and become man and wife. But after each time that they thought this, and before they could really speak of it to others, they quarrelled.

"I believe not in your power!" said Halmis, and she said it with scorn.

"I believe not in your power!" said Ramiki, and he said it with fierceness.

When they spoke thus each experienced ill-feeling toward the other and wished for some occult gift of hurting. They did not observe that these disbeliefs bubbled darkly from days when they did not believe in themselves. Halmis went to her brothers' house, Ramiki to his father's above the fields. The village talked, but old tradition gave it forth that prophets might be allowed to differ from other folk.

Whether individuals loved or hated, the river-country people had troubles of a collective nature. They had been long, long seated in a plain, great enough and rich enough for the forefathers, not so great nor so rich for the descendant swarm. Now it was crowded, now it was being sucked dry. For a time there seemed help in being a terror to the plain on the other side of a chain of hills, in organizing each

bright season a great raid to bring home wealth and provision for man and beast. But that recourse was failing. Other plains, too, were crowded, sucked dry, growing poor. . . . There was much exposure of children, almost always female children. The old, too, were put to death. But all that only partially helped.

People must move — at any rate, some people. There was an old song of the plain which said that before the memory of man there had been a moving; in short, that the plain-folk had moved from elsewhere into the plain. It was hard to believe. . . .

The chiefs and the elders consulted together. They applied for help to all likely forces, including, well to the front, the supernatural.

A concourse was held, an assembly of the folk of the plain. Not so many miles wide and long was the plain; it did not take thousands to make living difficult. The most got within hearing of them who harangued from the great flat stone that was the sacred or hallowed stone, alike of speech and of sacrifice. Chiefs must be orators, elders must know how to bring wisdom home, priest and prophet must be able to fix the ridge-pole. . . . All was done in order, throughout a day of sun and shadow.

Ramiki and Halmis stood together upon the stone that was wide as the floor of a house. The day was advanced, the light gold-red; behind were three great trees, before and to either hand the scimitar-shaped crowd of the people, excited already by music and by passionate, persuasive speech. The drums beat, the cymbals clanged, then silence, then right posturing by prophet and prophetess, then words half spoken, half sung, sent from the lips with force, ringing and reaching!

"Folk of the river-plain!"

chanted Ramiki.

"People of Arzan, the high god, the great god,
God of the gods!
For you I cried to Arzan.
'O Arzan!
The people increase as it were the river in spring time!'"

Halmis the prophetess took the chant: —

"In the fresh green month there are two birds!
In the bright, flowering month, there are six.
I said to the god,
'It is a weary thing,
This giving death to nestlings!
The old, too, often like to rest a little longer,
Watching the children!'
I said to the god!"

Ramiki chanted: —

"Arzan answered Ramiki the prophet,
'Look, O man!
How the river breaks its bonds and is at home in new lands!'"

Halmis chanted: —

"The god sang to Halmis — to Halmis who prophesies! —
'Stay the birds in the tree where they nested?
Lo, at morn-see the wings in the sky!'"

Ramiki made a great gesture. His voice soared and rang: —

"From the storm spoke Arzan: 'Learn O prophet,
What my folk of the plain have forgotten!
Of old ye moved as ye grew,
Ye left ever the eaten land for the fresh land!'"

Halmis swayed in the wind of rapture.

"Two shall stay and two shall go,"

chanted Halmis.

"For some love the home tree and some love the new tree!
The new soon becomes the home tree.
The god smiles on both so we judge when to alter!"

Ramiki moved upon the stone. At the edge he stooped, he caught from one below a drum, he beat upon it.

"I awaked in the morning!
Arzan who dwells in the mountain said, 'Go!'"

Halmis took cymbals, she lifted her arms, there clashed forth sonorous music.

"'Part!' saith the god.
'Two nations where there was one.
And one it shall tarry, and one it shall wander!' —
'Come!' cries the earth, 'for my arms they are wide,
And my breasts they are full, in the east and the west!'"

"Hai! we will divide!" cried the people; and would have done it that day if the chiefs and the elders had allowed. . . .

Halmis went down in the evening to the boat among the reeds and sat there in the moonshine, her arms upon her knees and her head upon her arms. Ramiki left the throng of chief men gathered in the chief house, drinking there red juice of the vine. He walked up and down in the moonlight. He was not calm within, nor triumphant because wisdom had become the choice of the people. Something dark within was spreading and staining the light within. The river-country people had many words for jealousy, but usually these pointed to a forthright lover's jealousy. That was not the jealousy that Ramiki felt to-night. He

spoke to the skies. "Why should she prophesy, dividing the praise?"

Down in the reeds Halmis rocked to and fro, making decisions.

When the wine had passed from their heads, in the favouring tide between foaming enthusiasm and the backdrag to old levels, the elders and chiefs pressed the partition of the people. Came to the river-plain humming days of excitement, deeper, more sonorous and richly coloured than any remembered. So many should fare forth, so many should rest behind! These individuals would stay, these would go. An imaginary line was drawn, and some stepped to the one side and some to the other. Heads of families and owners of wealth chose for themselves and their households, for women, youths, children, and bondfolk. So that they might be distinguished, those staying painted across their foreheads a band of blue, those going a band of red. A vast preparation of wagons arose, a sorting of flocks and herds, a gathering of horses and strong oxen, a filling of grain sacks, a heaping of weapons and implements. Life took a quicker stride, had more life in its eyes. Every day there was debating, every day choice.

Ramiki went down to the boat among the reeds. The sun was shining, the wind was blowing, the reeds were moving. Halmis sat in the broken boat, and Halmis had across her forehead a stripe of red. He halted, he stared. . . . He had come to find Halmis, to speak of their taking hands and faring forth with the migrating host — prophet and prophetess, and the prophet the head of that household! And here, before he spoke, was Halmis with her forehead marked for outfaring!

He stared.

"Ha, red-on-the-forehead!" said Halmis. "I had a dream last night! We met rivers and mountains, but the wagons and the oxen swam like boats and flew like eagles and we came to a golden house —"

Ramiki was often jealous of Halmis's dreaming, but he did not think now of that. All was lost in the fact of that red mark, made now, not after he had taken Halmis's hand in his, before witnesses!

He spoke, "Taru and Nardan, your brothers, stay in the plain. They have marked their foreheads with blue, and Ina and Matar, their wives, are marked with blue. All their household . . ."

"I leave their household," answered Halmis. "I am going to seek it — the golden house beyond the hills!"

"*My* house?"

"I want to know what is there, beyond the hills! It was not your house, Ramiki, in my dream, nor my house." She lifted a reed in her hand. "It was *the* house."

Ramiki moistened his lips. "A woman without a husband goes or stays as goes or stays her father. If her father be dead, then she goes or stays as goes or stays her brother or her nearest kinsman."

"They made that rule. I am prophetess of Arzan. I rule for myself. I have spoken to the chiefs and the elders. By the god-stone, many watching, I put red paint upon my forehead!"

Ramiki breathed hard. There was a Ramiki who was going to speak, and somewhere else there was another Ramiki. Both lived, but the one who had the word was of great size.

"It is unheard of!" said Ramiki.

He turned away, he left the shining sun, the blowing

wind, the moving reeds. He went away in a heated darkness to his house and sat there upon his bed. Like the beating of a drum in his head, over and over, resounded words he had overheard.

Had said one of the old wise men to another: "The god is greater in Halmis than in Ramiki!"

Now Ramiki did not believe that saying, and now he experienced an agonizing doubt, and now he turned to proving to himself and to others that it was not so. That had been yesterday. . . . In the night he had waked, and there had poured over him like the river in flood another feeling for Halmis. . . . At the height of the tide he had not cared that she had so much of the god. If it was so, it was well so! . . . The tide was a wonderful tide; it held an hour, and then it began to ebb. But when morning came there was yet a fulness that sent him through the shining sun and the blowing wind and the waving reeds to Halmis. Then the tide had sunk with a harsh and dreadful noise.

Ramiki sat upon his bed and listened to the drum beat in his head. "One said to the other, 'The god is greater in Halmis than in Ramiki!' One said to the other, 'The god is greater in Halmis than in Ramiki!'" His heart was bitter within him, bitter as a root he knew in the forest.

His father came into the house, and, sitting down, began to feather arrows.

Said Ramiki at last: "I found Halmis with a band of red upon her forehead. . . . She goes like a young man, walking alone!"

"That should not be," said his father. "If one woman does a thing like that, another woman will want to do so too."

"She is prophetess."

"She has breasts all the same," said the arrow-featherer.

That night, in the nighttime, staring from his mat into the velvet darkness, he did not want to keep her from going, for was not he, Ramiki, going? Then in the morning, with the sound of the crowing of the cocks, that sense of oneness fell again in two. He ceased to love Halmis. He felt again enmity and jealousy, and a great, oh, a great concern for himself. "Arzan! Arzan!" he cried. "Am I not man? Am I not the greater prophet?"

That day all the people saw him go away into a deep wood that yet was left upon the plain. He went with some ostentation of folded arms and brooding forehead. "The god will visit the prophet!" they said. In the evening Ramiki might stand upon the god-stone and break into rhapsody while all who were not preoccupied gathered to hear.

But though Ramiki returned at eve, it was not to the god-stone. He found Halmis in the glow, watching boys and girls who moved in a dance. He and Halmis went away together, down to the boat, for that was the quietest place.

"What did you do in the wood?" asked Halmis. "Sit all day and look at your shadow?"

It was evident that she was willing to quarrel. She was no less capable than Ramiki of formulating the notion that where there was not room for two one must be pushed away. She looked at Ramiki, and Ramiki, rightly or wrongly, suddenly believed that she wished there was blue paint upon his forehead. The thought was as unexpected as an earthquake and well-nigh as devastating.

They parted the reeds and stepped down to the boat. They sat there and looked blackly at each other.

"No, I did not," said Ramiki, "sit all day and look at my shadow. . . . I praised Arzan. . . . Then I heard his voice from the clouds."

Halmis shivered slightly. "What talk did he make to you?"

"His speech was about women," said Ramiki fiercely.

"Oh — ah!"

"It was as though I were in his mountain. He told me many things — great and wonderful things. To-morrow I am going again to the wood — to praise Arzan again and listen again."

"Then you will stand upon the god-stone and sing his words?"

"So!" said Ramiki. "In a great song. To which the folk will listen as I listened to Arzan."

Halmis looked at him in silence. When she spoke it was in a whisper. She bent forward, her hand touched his knee. "Ramiki . . . Did Arzan really speak? Perhaps it was only you — speaking to yourself?"

Her words had behind them at least an amount of comprehension. If it had been that way she could match it from her own experience! . . . Sometimes she thought that she really had seen the god or had heard the voice. At other times she thought blackly that it was only that Halmis who seemed a negligible thing. But she did not confide these doubts to the folk before whom she prophesied. Nor would Ramiki. Nor did she see how any could be brought to question Arzan in him.

Nevertheless, she ached to take the tall bright feather from Ramiki's headdress — to take it at least for a time! In fact, she felt much as Ramiki felt. Where he had

Halmis before him, she had before her Ramiki. When it came to that jealousy, there was small difference between them.

The difference between them was a matter of the status of men and the status of women — of hunters' stations. And this hunter may have a coign of vantage and, in security, bring down the game he wishes to bring down, and that hunter may be placed disadvantageously and the matter end quite differently.

Ramiki's eyes burned. He looked over I
at the many-shaped and tinted clouds. "A.
Arzan! He told me things about women th
thought of before!"

Halmis sat in silence. Before her, betv
Ramiki, formed a picture of the god-stone :
trees behind it, and the people pressing close
chanting greatly to them what Arzan had told
ing them believe. At his best Ramiki was a g
. . . What *had* Arzan told him?

She raised her eyes. "What did Arzan tell you?"

Ramiki laughed fiercely. "He told me why it was that women go or stay only as men say it!"

"Why is it, Ramiki?"

Ramiki looked at her, and now there was trader's cunning mixed with the prophet strain. "Arzan has not yet given me the right words! — It may be four or five days before I sing to the people."

"Four or five days," thought Halmis, but she thought it to herself. She nursed her knees and looked at the bowing reeds.

"In all ways," said Ramiki fiercely, "men are stronger than women!"

"Ha!" said Halmis. "The fountains of milk! The beings that he draws from himself!"

"Four things are *tabu* for women! Noble hunting, noble warring, noble owning, noble choosing!"

"O great man who is noble throughout! Cold does not chill him! Wet does not wet him! Thirst does not parch him, and those he binds are not shaped like him!"

"Arzan wither your tongue!" said Ramiki.

The sun carried its torch underground. The plain darkened, the wind sighed in the reeds. "Why do we quarrel so?" asked Halmis. "Now, I like Ramiki, and Ramiki likes me. And then I would kill Ramiki, and he me. And then I like Ramiki again, and am sorry. . . . Ramiki!"

She moved nearer to him. "Ramiki!"

Ramiki cried out. "O Arzan! still she befools me!"

He had cried so loudly that his words appeared still to sound over the marsh and the river. Halmis stood still, then, turning, stepped from the boat upon the reedy riverbank. "Thou fool! not to know when!" said Halmis.

Ramiki rose from his mat at dawn, drank milk and ate barley cakes, and passed through the fields to the thick wood. After wandering for some time he found a tree that liked him. It was huge of trunk and spreading of branch, and near by, in a round basin, a spring murmured. Ramiki sat down beneath the tree. At first he looked at the boughs and the leaves and the birds, and at the sky between the boughs. Then he looked at the spring, and it made a centre for him — a small, bright, round pool, shot at by the arrows of the sun. The wood was still, and had a manifold fragrance. Ramiki felt still likewise.

Ramiki spent the day in the wood. He had barley cakes with him in a wallet. Now and again he moved about,

once he slept a little. When he waked he saw a serpent drinking. About midday a great cloud mounted into the sky. At top it was dazzling white, but underneath and in hollows shadow-dark. Ramiki watched it until it sank again beneath the wood and there was only clear and open heaven. He watched it very intently, swaying his body back and forth as he watched. When it was gone his gaze returned to the spring. . . . He had a good day, a balmy, idea-flowing day!

It was so prosperous, his spirit was at once so fluent and so soothed, that earth and life, and Halmis in both, grew more than tolerable. Ramiki sat cross-legged in the wood and stared at the cloud or at the spring, until the god had given him the song he should sing. When he had it he relaxed, and resting against the tree let his mind go doze and play. The god had spoken and gone, but Ramiki would remember! After a time he sat upright again, and finding at hand a bit of wood, drew his knife from the sheath, and began to whittle an arrow. As he worked he hummed to himself. Once or twice he laughed. It slipped into his mind, from where he knew not, that that was a fine boulder to throw into the camp of women! . . . He felt so balm-bathed and free that he lost for a time any grudge against the camp of women, any grudge against Halmis.

The light began to weaken in the wood. Ramiki, moreover, was hungry. He rose from beneath the tree, and retraced his steps to the village. The sun was sinking as he came near. A red and gold light caressed the river-plain. He heard blow one of the long trumpets, and presently saw that folk were gathering to the central place where stood the god-stone. A boy passed him, running from the fields. Ramiki called after him. "What is doing?"

"Halmis-who-prophesies," spoke the boy over his shoulder, "will tell the folk who go what they shall find!" He ran on.

The balm flowed away from Ramiki.

He turned to the river, and there was Halmis coming up from the water-side. He waited for her. She came even with him, and the red sunlight made burning and bright the red upon her forehead and the red in her hair.

Ramiki choked. "The large things of the people are for a man's thinking upon and handling —"

"O Ramiki!" said Halmis, "how can I help thinking upon and handling my own?"

She moved on toward the god-stone where the people were gathered. Ramiki kept her company. At first they moved with an equal step, then Ramiki quickened his. Halmis looked aside at him. His frame was drawn to great height, his feet seemed hardly to touch the sunburned earth. He seemed to move in quivering air; the inrush of force was evident. "The god is in him! The god is in him!" thought Halmis. Quickening her step she came even with him again. But now Ramiki uttered a shout and began to run. . . .

He came to the massed people; crying aloud, he pursued his way. "Arzan! Arzan!" he cried. "I have been with Arzan in the wood! O people of the river-plain, Arzan has given it to me to say!"

The gathered folk were tow to flame, wax to the moment's sharp impression. The crisis in their affairs had lifted them, shaken them awake. Now they were ready constantly for new excitement, craved the new, or the old made new. It had been good that Halmis the prophetess should prophesy of what the going stream might find! It

was good that there should arrive the fresher alarum of Ramiki the prophet — Ramiki returning from an immediate interview with Over-Knowledge, Over-Power! "Arzan the great maker!" shouted Ramiki. "I have talked with Arzan! You have sinned before him, and I will show you how!"

All turned from prophetess to prophet. All saw Ramiki, but all had a sense of the overshadowing Energy. "Arzan!" cried the people, and "Hearken to the prophet!"

Ramiki came to the god-stone. He mounted to the place of the prophet. He turned, he faced the chiefs and the elders and the people, men and women. The wind blew his garment and lifted his hair; they thought that they saw around him the red light of Arzan. They turned, every one, from Halmis, they centred on Ramiki.

Halmis leaned against a tree. Her heart beat heavily. At first she had felt only rage. She thought she would come to the god-stone and dispute it with that usurper, and then had come fear to halt her. She hated fear, she fought it as with fire. But it was a great beast that, beaten away, came again! To-day she tried to fight fear with scorn, scorn being an arrow always in her quiver. But it failed to-day. Halmis looked at the women about her and farther away in the throng. There were many women, but that did not seem to help. . . . Men held better by all men. Women held better by the children, but the men by one another. . . . Halmis felt alone and afraid. Ramiki was speaking for Arzan. Arzan was a terrible deity and an eloquent! Halmis thought that a mist was rising around her. . . .

Ramiki was not telling what the people marked with red should find or do, out of the river country, beyond the heaven-propping hills. He was not telling how plentifully

now would be fed the folk marked with blue, the folk staying in the ancient land. He was not telling — or at least it did not yet appear that he was telling — why the wreath was given to man. He was not telling — or at least not yet telling — how, in this moment, the folk were sinning against Arzan. He was telling how the world was made, telling old things that they knew already, and perhaps new things.

Sometimes Ramiki spoke and sometimes he sang, passing from saying into singing, from singing into saying. To a great part of the listening throng what he said or sang was the literal word of Arzan. Imaginings and making to see and touch the Not-There were the Works of Arzan — when they were not the works of Izd, who, with the river-country people, meant darkness and demon. . . .

Passion sustained Ramiki the prophet. He was a strong man to-night, a dancer, a hunter, a chief with hawk wings bound upon his head. The red sunset passed into dusk, the dusk into night, bondmen lighted torches, the people slanted toward the god-stone. Ramiki sang the battles of Arzan and Izd — Arzan and his hosts and Izd and her hosts — Izd the monstrous serpent, Izd the ancient dragon! That was old story, but the river-country people did not easily tire of old stories. And Ramiki was singing with power, and there were new things that he was telling. In especial they learned feats of Izd that they had not known. They knew her slaying breath and the injuries she did to Arzan, and the keen knife with which Arzan slew her and made of her body the sky and the earth! But the prophet gave them new detail nd incident — new and exciting — and all to them seemed clothed in beauty and terror, and all was true — sublimely true!

Then Ramiki sang how Izd, though she was cut into sky and earth, yet made evil, and Arzan made good — Izd and her helpers and Arzan and his helpers. He sang the making of great waters, and the beasts of wood and field, and the making of trees and of grain, and it was all well known to the river-country people and often recited. He came to the making of people — of the great father-man and mother-woman, ancestors of the river-plain — and here he had brought from the wood new wisdom.

The river country had not had it before, but, dimly or clearly, it had been aware of that vast unexplained. Why? And why — and why? It had put forward groping and tentative answers to its own questions, but those answers had not really explained. The air held the answer diffused. Now it was coming together like the rich cloud that on summer days rose behind the mountain where Arzan dwelt.

Why were men here, and women there? Why, when a man entered his house, did he stamp with his foot to show mastership? . . .

Ramiki had used a great strain, a wide-flowing, deep-rushing chant. Now he changed. This to come was a story within a story. He made a pause, he regarded the deep night above, he altered posture and manner. The village, marked with blue and marked with red, drew breath for new things. There was a company of youths who, when prophet or prophetess spoke, were wont to band themselves at one side of the god-stone. These repeated loudly word or line wanting that stress, or in silences came in with refrains of their own, or merely shouted approbation of the god in the singer. Now while Ramiki watched the dark, they shouted, "Arzan in the prophet!"

Halmis heard them where she leaned against the tree,

decked to sing and not singing, here to prophesy from the god-stone and not prophesying, come from the river with a high heart and now knowing fear. It was like a spell upon her, a slow, cold poison in her veins. Ramiki — Ramiki — Ramiki only was singing to the people. . . . She heard him, and though she tried not to believe what he sang, at last in great part she believed. How could she else, being of the river-plain and so very like Ramiki who himself believed? . . . She was very capable of a sense of sin — and perhaps it all had come about that way. Arzan had his favourite — no doubt of that! There must be reasons for favour and disfavour. . . . Ramiki — Ramiki — Ramiki was singing. As she stood under the tree she seemed to herself, for one strange moment, to have a child in her arms. . . . Ramiki sang: —

"On the mountain-top stood the stone of Arzan,
Arzan-stone where Arzan dwelled.
Izd came and coiled around the mountain.
Izd said to her daughters, 'Yet shall we win!'
Arzan had nothing to do that day.
He was ready for work he had dreamed about.
By the sacred river stood the sacred tree.
He broke a bough that was shaped to his mind.
Arzan sat on the stone and carved,
Arzan carved the bough of the tree.
Arzan cut from the bough a man!
Fair was the man, and tall and brave!
'My man,' said Arzan, and gave him blood,
Piercing the arm that shook the god-spear,
Pouring the drops in the veins of the man.
'My man,' said Arzan, and gave him warmth,
Held to his side within the god-robe.
'My man,' said Arzan, and gave him breath,
Putting his mouth to the first man's mouth.
'My man,' said Arzan, and gave him speech:
'Arja!' said the god. Said Arja, 'Arzan!'"

The river-plain that was descended from Arja clapped hands and rocked itself. The band of young men shouted to the sky: —

"'Arja!' said the god. Said Arja, 'Arzan!'"

Ramiki pursued his story, and while he chanted he acted.

"Izd heard them talking, the evil Izd!
Izd and her daughters were coiled below.
Arja lived happy, Arja alone.
Arzan spoke from the sacred mount.
'To make more blissful, I will give you sons.'
Arzan shook leaves from the sacred tree.
They fell in a throng around the god-stone.
They fell down as leaves, they rose up as men,
Sons of Arja!"

"*Sons of Arja!*" the youths shouted. "*Arja's sons!*"

"Ten moons of Arzan, a thousand years,
Arja lived happy, he and his sons.
They had golden bows and golden arrows,
Antlered deer to make them food.
When they put in wheat it came up thick.
When they planted barley it never failed.
Arzan breathed on the grass that grew around,
So were sheep and oxen and horses bred,
And all were the best that ever were seen!
The fish in the river loved the net.
They made a boat with a thought from a tree.
Their houses were large and filled with goods.
Arzan from pebbles formed bondmen,
Made them strong to take and bring,
Gave them heart-love for the Arzan-men,
So that they wrought and never rebelled.
The grapes grew in clusters twice that big!
Winter was not, nor was parching heat.
Rain came at their call and went at their wish.
Arzan made a herb named Love-among-friends.
They planted it thick, and tended it well.

Arzan took from each man a red drop of blood,
Mixed it with earth and made the bull, Courage.
Arzan took from each man a thought while he slept,
Drew all through his hands and made the rope, Wisdom.
A thousand years lived Arja there,
On the mountain sides, near the Arzan-stone.
Izd and her daughters coiled below,
Cried Izd to her daughters, 'Yet shall we win!'
Arzan looked down from the Arzan-stone.
'Are you there, Izd? The man is mine!'"

Shouted the youths, —

"'*Are you there, Izd? The man is mine!*'"

The strong sound smote the night. The flame of the torches appeared to leap. The god-stone was lighted, and the figure of the prophet. The crowd, seated or standing, bent like vines to the sun. Interest was carried to a point, and through the point, on the other side of the point, seemed to be space and new landscapes. The mind of the river-plain was ready for explanation — so that the explanation did not offend its sense of probabilities, so that it seemed godly and kingly, so that it was a boat that could sail the river. . . .

"Izd said naught, but she set to work;
Izd and her daughters set to work.
Over their heads they wove a roof,
Wide-long as earth and black as soot.
Arzan looked down from the mountain-top,
But Izd was hidden under her roof.
Izd took black mire, a reed and fire,
Izd took white flint and a cherry stone,
Izd took dawn-mist and sunset-red,
Izd took false-dreams and ill-delight,
And out of them all Izd made a shape.
She gave it breasts and a beardless face.
Izd and her daughters lived in the shape.

Arja sat in the vineyard deep.
Izd tore the cloud-roof vast and black.
Beneath the rent she set the shape.
Arja said, 'I see down there,
In a wild, bright light a thing most strange.'
Arja said, 'From that to me
Runs like a stream, a deep, deep wish.'
Arja turned to the Arzan-stone,
'Arzan, O Arzan, maker of me!
Down there is that that would climb to me!'
Arzan looked through Izd's torn roof.
Arzan was angry with Izd the snake.
He made a storm and thatched the place,
So that ever it thundered there and burned,
And the Arzan-man could not see the shape.
Then Arja pined, though he could not die.
'O Arzan, make me a thing like that,
To keep me company in Arja-land!'
Then Arzan frowned and shook the mount.
Arja hid his head and Arja feared.
'I am naught,' said Arja, 'but thou art god!'"

"*We are naught!*" cried the people, "*but he is god!*" The drum-players and the long trumpets were come to the stone.

"Arzan took a bough from the sacred tree,
Less was it at once than the Arja-bough!
Arzan sat by the river and wrought with the bough.
A shape Arzan made, like and not like to a man.
Smooth-faced he made it and gave it breasts.
Woman, said Arzan, and wrought it fair.
And gave her to Arja in the grove.
'Live!' said Arzan, 'Be wise and good,
Tend Arja-land without sorrow and pain,
And give to me praise who made all well!'
Then Arzan took of the reeds of the land,
He spake his word and they stood up fair,
Daughters of men, with streaming hair.
Izd and her daughters wept with rage.
There rose a spring on the mountain side.

It made a pool like a silver shield.
The clouds saw themselves and the trees around.
It drew from a spring by the Arzan-stone.
'Touch it not!' said Arzan. 'It is mine alone.'
Izd and her daughters coiled below.
Said Izd to her daughters, 'Yet shall we win!'"

The music beat and blared. The women of the village looked aslant at the men, and the men at the women. Whatever there might be of old, old woes, terrors, mistakes, jealousies, sins, conflicts, emulations, tyrannies seemed, for one moment, to come up through the past, burst into fire, and stream and fork.

"The Arja-woman walked by herself.
The pool made a gleaming among the trees.
Said the Arja-woman, 'Were that water mine,
Surely it would give me strange wealth and bliss!'
The Arja-woman looked around,
The Arja-woman moved through the thick trees.
The Arja-woman sat by the spring.
The water bubbled and the water shone.
'Why is 't forbid?' said that lately-made.
Izd, below heard the word she said.
Izd tore the roof so the woman might see.
And under the rent she set the shape.
'I see down there a strange, fair thing.
I wish it were come more near to me!'
Up rose the shape and clasped her knee.
'Put your arms around and draw me close,
And wish it to be and it will be.
And we who are two will then be one,
And we shall drink of the Arzan spring!'
The Arja-woman put her arms around,
And drew her close and wished it to be.
The shape entered in; the two were one.
The shape was evil, the shape was Izd.
The Arja-woman grew more fair,
But evil of heart, and a bringer of ill.

Arjaya stooped to the Arzan spring.
She drank the water, she washed there.
The tabu-water, the sacred spring!"

"*Ahhh!*" breathed the river-country pec women. It was so. They had known it must .

"She took a pitcher and drew it full.
On her head she bore it through the grov
Arja sat in the pleasant shade,
And feathered his arrows bright of hue.
Arja sat by the vineyard edge,
And sang to himself with a merry heart.
He saw Arjaya and he felt a thirst.
She came to Arja through the grove.
'Arja, hail! Will you have to drink?'
She lowered the pitcher to his hand.
Arzan thundered from the Arzan-stone."

"*Arzan! Give us protection!*" cried the rhythmically moving river-country people.

"'Whence drew you the water?' asked the Arzan-man.
She stood with anklets of silver fine.
She stood with armlets of burning gold.
She stood with a frontlet starry bright.
She stood in a robe as thin as mist.
And she had within her that witchcraft shape.
She bent herself and she kissed his mouth.
'Good is the water. I drank. Drink thou!'
Then Arja drank the tabu-water.
Arzan darkened from the mountain-top."

Arja and Arjaya, and how and when the Golden Age went down. . . . The river-country people beheld the form of that of which they had long heard rumours, old speech-of-things, passing from people to people, changing shape but keeping substance as it passed! The river-country people both remembered and freshly imagined.

"Arzan! Arzan! The sin — the sin!" cried the river-plain.
Men believed and women believed.

"He poured down fire and bitter smoke,
The vineyards were blasted, the barley, the wheat.
Day-night, week-month fell fire and ashes.
The flocks and the herds went down to death.
The antlered deer ran out of the earth.
The fish drank the fire, the river sank.
Arzan threw stones from the mountain-top.
They fell like rain, they smote and slew
The sons and daughters, the leaf-wrought folk,
And the pebble-bondmen who drudged for love.
Arja and Arjaya hid under a hill.
Arzan ceased to thunder and pour down fire.
But the land was a withered and briery place.
Arja and Arjaya crept from the cave.
And Arja had sorrow for that great sin.
But Arjaya had Izd coiled round her heart.
Arzan spoke from the Arzan-stone.
'For vineyard and wheat that grow of themselves,
For golden bow and golden dart,
For antlered deer that never fail,
For ox and horse of a mighty breed,
For shining fish that love the net,
For boats adorned that are never lost,
For houses large and heaps of goods,
For sons of Arja who live in bliss,
For work-folk strong who are glad of toil,
For always-spring, for life all sweet,
Arja, O Arja! tarry and see
What shall fall to you from out my mount,
Because you drank of the tabu-water,
Because you held my power so light,
Because Izd came between you and me!'
Arzan thundered and Arja feared.
Arjaya kneeled upon the ground.
Arzan spoke from the Arzan-stone.
'Woman I made from the lesser bough,
And gave for help and gave for play.
Now woman shall have the greater pain!

Hers is the sin of the tabu-water,
She turned to Izd and made her her god,
Half Izd she is, that evil snake,
And Arja she harmed, the Arzan-man,
And shut him from the blissful land!
Now take from her her anklets bright,
And take from her her armlets gold.
And take from her her frontlet of stars,
And mark her brow with the mark I show.
In all that is done man shall be head,
Man shall rule and woman serve,
Man shall speak and woman be mute,
Man shall own and woman own not.
Folk shall she bear to fill the land.
The sons shall rule, the daughters serve,
The sons shall speak, the daughters be mute,
The sons shall own, the daughters not.
For the sons are Arzan, the daughters Izd!'"

Ramiki ceased his singing. His heart was freed, and he felt relief and escape, and a cheerful largeness of mood. The anger against Halmis was fallen. There even stole again over his being a fondness for that prophetess. The energy that had boiled within, thick and murky red, had been beautifully worked off by the late improvisation. Diffused and expanded through quite vast ranges, it was no longer an aching and concentrated desire to pay Halmis back and to make evident his own superiority. He became conscious of a tranquillity, of something like vision above vision. . . . Through this pushed suddenly up, for all the world like a lily in a pond, a willingness, a desire, that Halmis should keep the red band upon her forehead, that she should go, if she would, like a young man, walking alone! But he had made it too late for that!

The people of the river-plain thought it best that women should break no more tabus. . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE AMAZON

THE country of the Amazonian women ran in deep mountain gorges back from the sea to a tableland and certain forested peaks. At the foot of the gorge spread salt meadows, flat and green, overbreathed by the fragrant sea wind. Here was capital pasturage, and here on a day came down from the plateau a dozen mounted women driving before them flock and herd. The day was warm, the meadows bright. These gave to shining sands, the sands to sapphire sea. Behind the level green sprang the wood. Lowing and bleating, cattle and sheep came to the grass. The drovers saw all disposed, then, hot and tired with much work from dawn till noon, dismounted, fastened their horses in the wood and went down to the sea. Having bathed, with laughter and play, they stretched themselves upon the sand and opened a great wallet that held bread and dried meat, and untied the mouth of a wine skin.

Their town was built three leagues away, in a cup of the mountain excellently guarded by grey crags. They thought that it had always been there, though indeed the old wise women said no. They said that their mothers had told them that their mothers' mothers had heard of a time when there was a battle at the edge of the world, and that then fifty women, fleeing, had climbed to these mountains and here built a town and kept ancient customs. These were the ancestresses and divine! However that might be, here was now the town and the people. A queen ruled them.

On certain ritual days of the year they had intercourse with men of two neighbouring nations. Of the children born they kept the girls, but when the boys had seen twelve summers they sent these to the father nation. Year by year their ways of life, at first not so strange, grew to seem strange and stranger yet to the peoples who heard of them and elaborated and legended what they heard. To themselves it was old nature, very right and proper, dear, familiar life!

The drovers lying upon the sand, between the blue sea and the salt meadow, were all on the younger side of prime. Among them was Lindane, the Queen's daughter. The sea-wind caressed them, they heard the contented voices and movements of the grazing beasts, they had bread and red wine and sweet rest. When they had eaten they posted two watchers, and the rest closed their eyes.

To the left of where they lay dipped into the sea a hook of land, a long, crooked finger of Mother Earth. The watchers looked inland toward the wealth in the meadows, the horses fastened in the wood. The world hereabouts went little to sea; the sea made no danger save to small fishing craft in rough weather. The watchers never saw until too late the long, dark boat, fifty-oared, with sails beside, with carven prow, that stole around the crooked finger. . . . The watchers heard the sails when they rattled down, and sharply turned to see the prow touch the sand and the men leap forth — and all so close the eyes might be seen! "Awake! Awake!" cried the watchers and snatched bow and quiver. The ten sprang up, seized weapons; all raced for the wood and those tied steeds. Close after them, with shouts, came the sea-rovers.

There were fifty and five strong young men, strong and

untamed as eagles, swoopers from islands below the horizon. The chief was Sandanis. Elsewhere upon the far-stretching mainland coast they had lifted spoil in their talons, robbing towns that spoke a dialect akin to their own. The long boat held wrought gold and brass, rich woven goods, strange weapons, objects of value. Here upon this strand was stopping only to fill the water casks. But when they saw the sleeping forms the sea-eagles again set beak and talon.

At first they did not know the twelve for women, for they were not habited like the women of the islands or of any country that the sea-rovers knew, and they were tall and deeply bronzed, and they showed a practised hand with javelin and with bow and arrow. They ran like deer, and the sea-rovers ran at their heels. They menaced the pursuit as they ran, then, reaching the wood, plunged past tree and swinging vines to the tethered horses. They waited not to untie, but each stripping knife from sheath, severed the bridle and sprang to steed. One further minute and they might have shown clean heels, won away to their mountain fastness. But the fifty were on them, keen as winter wolves, knife-armed, javelin-armed, knowing their quarry now for the famed women! A hundred hands caught at bridle and mane, or used knife or flung javelin against the horses. Of these several sank to earth, others, rearing, beat with their hooves at the foe. One only escaped, making with its rider at a furious gallop for the trail, the upward-running gorge and the crag-guarded town.

Yet mounted or with foot upon the ground, the remaining Amazons fought for life and freedom. They fought with knife and shortened javelin, being unable to use bow

and arrow in the close conflict. They fought strongly, with skill, with desperation and tenacious courage. Lives were lost from among the sea-rovers, bitter wounds were given. But the sea-rovers were fifty and they who had brought the cattle to the salt meadows were twelve. And one was gone and two were slain and two had death hurts. The seven that were left were overpowered, dragged to earth and bound with thongs and cords.

Lindane, the Queen's daughter, fought with Sandanis, the king of the sea-rovers, a second strong man giving him needed help. It took the two to bind her. Sandanis's hands upon her wrists, the other's against her shoulders, they forced her down the sands, they lifted and flung her over the boat side. All the seven were brought to the boat and guarded there while the sea-rovers gathered wood and burned their dead.

The sea-rovers drew out to no great length the details of that rite. In their minds was a humming thought of the fled Amazon and of possible rescue. Kindling the pyre, they left it blazing there, at the edge of the wood. A fore-wind had sprung up and they took advantage. Making sail in haste, they left behind the golden sands and the salt meadows and the dark, mounting forests of that land.

The sun went down, the moon came up. The women yet lay where they had been flung. Then Lindane rose to her knees, and with her two or three of the more resilient sort. They looked astern, and by the light of the great full moon saw, sinking from them, their country-shore and all it held of home and friends. Lindane, straining at her bonds, broke them, and with her doubled hands struck Sandanis that was nearest to her. Sandanis, thinking himself conqueror, laughed. He seized the Amazon's wrists,

struggled with her, and nodded to his helper to wrap the thong about her arms. Enmeshed again, she turned her head and prayed to the sea.

When the moon was an hour high they came to an islet known to be desolate, a mere hand's breadth of waste sand and rock, blanched by the moon. The favourable wind had fallen, and the rowers wished not to row through this night. They pushed prow upon the shelving sand, they left the boat and took with them those captured women. They had store of meat and wine. They ate and drank, sitting in the moonlight upon the sand, above the murmuring sea, and they set food and drink before their captives. Their tongue and the women's tongue had one origin. Victor and vanquished understood much of each other's speech. "Eat, drink!" said the sea-rovers. "Our country is going to be your country." When they themselves had finished their meal, then, with noise and laughter, they cast lots. The moon shone very brightly, a soft daylight seemed to visit the place.

Sandanis was the island king. He cast no lot, but made his choice at once, and her he chose was for the king alone. "I take the flame-top," he said.

The king's comrades laughed and clamoured. "O Sandanis, she will turn thee red too! She is demon!"

"I am her demon bridegroom," said Sandanis with answering laughter. "I have come from afar to her!"

The moon climbed to her meridian, and all the islet was bathed in light. It was light upon the beach where life lay, shaped into men and women; it was light where the sea-rovers' king held between his arms Lindane whom he had bound. The dawn when it came hardly made it seem more light. The dawn reddened, burned scarlet in sea and in

sky. The wide-winged birds sailed and circled and with harsh voices uttered their cry to the morning. The sun sprang out of the sea, and he was red and strong. Sandanis and his companions once more bestowed those captive women in the boat and pushing from the desolate isle, themselves leaped in and lifted oars. The favourable wind sprang forth again; they hoisted sails and steered for the island that they called home.

Five days they sailed or rowed as the wind sent them on or failed them. The second night Lindane's teeth met in Sandanis's shoulder. In return he struck her so mighty a blow that she lay stunned, the moonlight blanching her backward-drawn face. Sandanis, regarding her, felt he knew not what of ruth. He bathed his own wound with wine and he forced wine between the Amazon's lips. She stirred, opened her eyes and raised herself upon her hand. "Flame-top!" he said, "where did you learn to bite so hard?"

But "Let me go!" was all her answer. "Let me go!" and the ruth passed for that time from his heart.

When the sixth morning broke it showed the island. The sea-rovers broke into a chant of rejoicing for home, but the women they had rapt away looked on a picture of their own home, their home that the morning did not show.

Limestone cliffs had the island with woods climbing to mountain pastures, and above these a rounded mountain-top. Many springs it had, and sunny glades, and deep ravines where the shade was black. Huge spreading trees it had, and blossomy meads and hillsides planted with the vine, and fields of waving grain. It owned sheep and goats and oxen, horses and herds of swine, fed by the each-year-renewed rain of beech-nut and acorn. Coming to the hu-

man, herdsmen were there, shepherds and shepherdesses, and tillers of the earth, both men and women. Artisans also the island held, though not so many of these. But carpenter, mason, and smith were there, shipwright and bowyer and others beside. And old prowess in such lines and now old custom had given these and like crafts to men. Certain crafts leaned to women and women were traders-in-little. Household offices fell to women, and women ground at the mills, and all the garments, whether for use or ornament that the people wore, were of their weaving and fashioning, and the food they prepared and cooked, and in their hands was the cleanliness of all, and they kept alight the fires. Also they bore and long suckled the children, and gave them their early training.

Above the mass of the island population, men and women, bond and free, stood in self-seized and self-confirmed rank the warlike sort, the fillers of long boats, the sea-eagles swooping upon other islands and the shadowy mainland, traders-in-great on occasion, raptors of goods and of lives when that better suited. Out of this body of war men, young and in prime and old, had risen by degrees the elder-wise, the firm and politic, to become a council and point the road their history should tread, and at last from captains, chiefs, and counsellors had come the chief of chiefs, the casting voice, the king. And all these were men, and when they died they left to their sons. Next in caste stood the attendants and ministers and interpreters of the gods, and these were men and women, as the gods themselves were male and female. But, aided by that topmost caste, the priest was gaining over the priestess, the god over the goddess. The highest god, the ruler of the rest, was held to be by nature male. In the island, man and

woman professed to heal the body. But the dominant wind blew for the man-physician and against the woman. Both men and women made minstrelsy, and men and women wove the dance. But in the island they that bore rule and heaped together the fruit of war and directed public action were men. And the servants of the gods that were strongest to persuade or to awe were men.

To this island came the Amazon.

The cliffs lifted higher, the green grew brighter, the sea-eagles saw their harbour and its small white quay, and their town on the hill above the sea, saw the folk hastening down from the gates. They raised a home-coming song, welcoming shouts rang from the water-side. The boat flew on with sail and oar. The sails rattled down, the oars sent it forward, it lay beside the gleaming, landing place. Arms were outstretched, there prevailed a leaning down, a springing up, shouts, vaunts, welcomes, a swarm of bodies, a humming of the mind. Here was home-in-triumph for the sea-eagles; here was land-of-captivity for the women from that old continent.

The house of Sandanis! That was a very great house according to the notions of the island and the time. It was filled with bond and free, but with more of the bond than the free. When they reached it, built above the town, and entered a court that enclosed for shade two vast sycamores, forth from the inner rooms to meet her son came the widowed woman, the old island queen. With her moved her two daughters, Lindace and Ardis, and behind them pressed the women of the household.

The king's men who had robbed with the king took each to his own house his share of the spoil that had been heaped

in the king's court and portioned there. Brass and gold had been heaped, and weapons and implements and rich stuffs and adornments, and among these had place the captives from that ancient strand. With a beating of voices a crowd entered the court. Sun and shade struggled there. Women were weighed against gold and brass. All things were parted and in the mean time the feast was made and set in Sandanis's hall. Bondsmen took away to each sea-rover's house his chosen spoil. To the six of greatest fame went the six Amazons, companions of Lindane. But in the court, beneath the hugest sycamore, yet rested the gold and brass, the weapons, the rich stuff and the woman set apart to Sandanis the king. The crowd of the unconsidered dwindled. The chief men passed with Sandanis into his kingly hall, there to feast and carouse and recite mighty deeds.

The island folk had looked with curiosity upon those stranger women, unlike other women, different from what the gods had created women to be! Hands had touched them, voices had beaten against them. But now six of the seven had been taken away, and all the crowd was dwindling. There came and stood before the Amazon shared to the king three priests of the island, priests of a warlike god who was become the chief deity. One was a man past middle-age, a dark enthusiast. The other two were younger.

"Woman-out-of-nature," said the first, "who is your country-god?"

Lindane sat silent among goods and weapons and cunningly wrought matters in silver and brass and gold. "She is dumb," said those who had gathered behind the priests. "Maybe the king has cut out her tongue!"

"Speak, man-woman!" said the second priest, inferior

to the first. "Who is the god of your country? Whoever he be he is less than our god!"

"They have," said one behind, "a goddess only, no god!"

"Woman and captive, answer the chief priest!" said the youngest priest, and he turned red as he spoke.

But the Amazon did not answer. The chief priest's look darkened over her. "Not to us the offence, but to the god!" he said; and turning with the two, went away.

The press in the king's court further lessened. Came, threading her way through the groups, an old handmaid, one named Eunica. She spoke to Lindane. "My mistresses, the old queen and her daughters, would have speech with you, Amazon!"

Lindane followed her across the court and by a passage to a steep stair, and so to an upper room lined with oak. Here sat the old queen with a silver distaff in her hands, and beside her a basket of coloured wool. The daughters sat near her on cushions, and they, too, had distaffs, and in the back of the room handmaids wove at a mighty loom.

Spoke the old queen. "Stranger woman, were you bond or free before my son the king took you?"

Said Lindane, "My mother is the queen of my country."

"Then you shall have," answered the old queen, "an ivory distaff to spin with. There are here three daughters of kings, and they all have ivory distaffs. Sit down and spin."

There was but an hour to spin before dusk fell, with supper for that great house. All descended from the upper room, but they did not eat, that eve, in hall, because the king and his chief men were feasting there, and wine, wine, wine was flowing.

In Sandanis's hall the torchlight was bright, but through the rest of the house it flared dim. At last the Amazon came to a place where was hardly any light, to a cell in the wall where she would sleep that night with Eunica, the old handmaid. So near was it to the great central room of the house that there might be heard in waves the mingled voices of the feasting men. What light there was seemed to come from that place of triumph, stealing through cracks in the wall.

Eunica had a bed of straw spread with sheepskins. The two bondwomen sat upon it, in the cell narrow as a tomb.

"I was the daughter of a king," said old Eunica. "Sandanis's father brought me here. Then I was young like you, but my hair was never red like yours. The old queen was young, too. She made herself a terror to me, but Myrtus cared more for my hand than he did for her whole body. But Myrtus died. Long, long ago, Myrtus died. . . . Sandanis was to have wed the king's sister of the next island. But the maiden perished at sea, being brought here by her brothers. Now there is talk of a bride from another island. When she comes, if Sandanis yet holds you in liking, she will hate you. She will find occasion against you. When Sandanis likes you no longer, then, if you break a water-jar, or if there is a knot in your weaving, she will have you beaten. And when Sandanis likes you no longer, he will not care — he will not lift a finger to help you!"

"Sandanis. . . . That is his voice now in the hall. It is as though the sea were behind me and about and before. . . . Ah, Sandanis! I hate thee!"

"Hate or love, be wolf or dog — by all the dark gods, what does it matter?" said Eunica.

"Has it been always, in your earth, that a man could do so with a woman?"

"Always that ever I heard of," answered Eunica. "I do not know where time goes to, behind us."

"Will not the women conspire and slay them?"

But Eunica laughed at that. "When creatures are tamed, the power to bound and to rend is there and is not there!"

"Now, by the goddess! I would untame them!"

Eunica laughed again. "Then, to show the way, each must rend its own hunter! Now I had Milon by Myrtus, and I could not rend Myrtus. — I have wonder if you would rend King Sandanis."

Rising, she moved to the wall and with her fingers loosened a wedge of wood, broad as an axe-head. The cell became more light, the sound of revel fuller and more plain. The old handmaid came back to the pallet. In the hall they sang war the glorious, the chief exalted, the warlike gods. They sang man-strength and what they called freedom. They sang the rape of gold and land, the rape of women and the rape of lives. The harp-strings were struck, wine flowed, men beat fist against board. With flashing eyes, with eloquence of gesture, starting to their feet, men declaimed their virtues. All through the king's house was listening; up and down ran an hypnotized, inner murmuring. "It must be so. It must be so."

The night passed, and the next day and night, other days and other nights. Sandanis the king and Lindane from the Amazon country drew together, dragged apart, and neither knew at times whether a passion of love or a passion of hatred was what their souls meant. . . .

In this island stood a principal fane, built to the god of

the sea-rovers, in a wood that topped a cliff that fell sheer to a foaming sea. Here came Sandanis and his following to sacrifice, and to hear from the dark priest who lived by the fane if a bride from the island that on clear days might be seen afar would bring luck to the king's house, binding in amity Sandanis and the king of that land. The wood was dark, the poplars shook in a whistling wind, the priest divined, and brought the king an answer from the god. "The bride will bring fortune if the prow of the ship sent to bring her is touched with the life of the king's latest prey."

Sandanis heard. "That would mean," he said, "the bulls I took from the herdsmen of the red island." And he sent for the bulls and sacrificed them.

That done with due ceremonies, a fifty-oared ship, the prow smeared with bull's blood, quitted quay and harbour for the myriad-painted sea and the island like a little cloud upon the horizon. No great number of days and back it came, broken-winged, less twenty of its oarsmen. No bride was with it, but a story of disaster, sudden inexplicable enmity of that island folk, found arrayed against them when they landed. . . . There arose a murmur in King Sandanis's town.

Said Sandanis in council, "That island woman is not fair, and her brother who is king much resembles a quicksand. As well not treat with him, nor be called his friend!"

The cattle of the island fell sick. From every dell and meadow and mountain pasture came herdsmen ominously shaking the head, bringing to the town one tale. A solemn procession wound, men and women, and the king at the head, up to the fane above the sea. The god was pro-

pitiated; the priest, a poplar wand in his hand, stood as in a trance, then opened his mouth and gave forth the words of the god. "The cattle will grow strong when the horns of a black, a white, and a red bull are touched with the life of the king's latest prey."

The crowd murmured like the sacred grove. "That would mean," said Sandanis, "the hare that yesterday ran through the court and was taken from under my cloak where it lay on the ground." And he sent for the hare and sacrificed it, and touched the horns of the bulls with the blood. Likewise he gave to the god three great pots of brass and an image of silver.

That was one day. The next he took bow and quiver and with eight companions went hunting in the forest that stretched to the mountain-top. "I will shoot stag or doe that shall be latest prey," said Sandanis to himself. But, going, a prodigy occurred. The sky blackened, then lightning rived an oak before him, and the spread of the bolt caused the king to reel, and made as dead for an hour right arm and right knee. The eight wove a litter of branches and brought him down through the forest. In sight of the king's house vigour returned, and he stepped from the litter and made them scatter the branches. But he spoke no more of hunting, but held silence and a knitted brow. Entering the house, he went into his chamber and shutting out all, lay there in darkness and strife of mind. The eight, parting from the king, were not silent.

The cattle continued to sicken and to die. A monstrous hailstorm came and cut down the wheat and beat into ruin the clusters of young grapes. The fishermen of the island took few fish in their nets and those not the ones desired. At last the people said openly, "The king's latest

prey, that he took with his two hands, who is it but that woman from the Amazon country?"

Sandanis, in his house, listened to the chief priest of the island, and he listened with a hunted mind and a divided will. "Man cannot avoid the god!" warned the dark priest. "If the god's hand points to this abhorrent and barbarian woman, will King Sandanis say him nay?"

"And if I did?" said Sandanis.

The priest rose and stood in the shadowy place. The king of men, the priest of the gods — these two were, or seemed to be, the greatest of the shapes that trod the earth! The king-shape appeared to have sinew and bulk, the priest-shape height. Sometimes the king-shape twisted the neck of the priest-shape, but ever the next hour it rose the same. Sometimes the priest-shape made the king-shape creep upon the earth, but never could it keep it there. Sometimes the two were friends, and though they used differing darts, pursued the same quarry. Sometimes the two were one, priest-kings. In the countries where that was so the ruler-shape had power indeed. . . . In this island of the blue sea king and priest were two. But the priest had in his quiver awe of the huge supernatural. And all shapes, king-shapes and others, deeply feared those arrows, dipped in juices not of earth.

When now the chief priest stood in the dusk of the king's chamber, Sandanis saw the bow in his hands and the arrow headed against himself. "King Sandanis! King Sandanis! The god will part your house from you, all your friends and your island —"

Sandanis, sitting upon his couch, clenched hands upon the wrought cedar. The chief priest felt for and found a master arrow, and found it the sooner for that he, also, at

times, knew lands deeper than the land of worldly loss. He towered, he became the invulnerable Archer. "Are you more great, O man! than God? Are you more wise than the Immortal? Do you withstand? Then your part in him will dissolve like a cloud! It will pass like a cry when he is not listening!"

A seabird went by the king's door with a whistling cry. Rose the priest's voice, "A portent! — A portent! —"

Men took and bound the Amazon in the king's house. The priests made proclamation of a great and solemn procession to the fane and the altar above the sea. That was to be in the morning. In the deep middle of the night stole King Sandanis to the room hollowed in stone where there was wont to be kept the sacrifice until the east was red.

The two men without the door said naught, but rested on the earth, their heads wrapped in their mantles. The king went in, and there were two torches, burning gold-coloured and straight, and between them, bound to a stone sat Lindane.

Sandanis took station opposite. "Lindane! Lindane!"

Lindane opened her eyes. "Thou who would slay me! Are there no queens and priestesses to draw breath and cry 'Save'?"

"Queens are but kings' wives or mothers. If the god says 'Sacrifice!' will the priestesses say him nay?"

"The god! O Thou-who-bringest-forth! where art thou, my goddess?"

"Lindane, I love thee — and yet thou must die!"

"O Earth! this love!"

"Such as love is on earth, I have it for thee."

"Maybe so," answered the Amazon. "I have been

weary of the sun since you took me by numbers on my own sea-strand."

"By strength of my own arm, also!"

"Strong arm, dull wit, unjust heart!"

"O woman, are you so different from me?"

"If I had here an apple," said Lindane, "I would cut it in two, and give Sandanis half, keeping half myself. The two halves would not be different, but the king would have one, and a slave for the sacrifice the other!"

Sandanis came nearer to her. They kept silence in the rock-hewn place, then the island king uttered a cry. "When we fought that day in the wood by the salt meadow, yea, by the god! when I sent a javelin through the neck of your great white horse and dragged you down, it was as though many times we had fought and loved before!"

"Much fighting, little loving. — O my mother! O my queen!"

"Thou art for the sacrifice. I may not touch thee to help thee. The god has said it."

"O Earth! This love that a god can make to be put off and on like a garment!"

"Unless a king were god, he could not help —"

"And would he then? . . . O my goddess, hear me!"

"The god's word is over every goddess. . . . Lindane that diest, live if thou canst!"

"The grey rock town upon the grey mountains —"

"I that thought it was sweet, find it bitter to be king —"

"O my goddess! Back to me comes every sin. . . . The cock is crowing!"

The door was opened by the men without. King Sandanis hid head and face in his mantle and went from the

rock chamber, hallowed to the sacrifice. The cock crew again, the dawn opened slowly, like a red flower.

The processions formed in the town, in the country side, before the king's high house. The participants carried a sacred torch, they carried images of the god, they carried baskets of flowers and burning incense. Music went with them. The priests and King Sandanis walked at the head, and behind them walked the Amazon. "Now the god will smile upon us!" sang the people. "For here is the king's latest prey!"

In the wood, before the image of the god, upon the altar, they took the life of the sacrifice, and they touched with it the prows of the ships in the harbour, and the horns of bulls, red, white and black.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRIESTESS OF MARDUK

BABYLON, builded of brick, lay four-square in its fat plain. Fields of the best grain in the world shimmered out and afar, westward, beyond Euphrates to the desert edge, eastward to Tigris, to Akkad north, and south to the sea where stood Eridu, city of Ea, the old Father-God. Babylon was moated, Babylon was walled, a great, slow river ran through Babylon. Houses stood thick in Babylon, and the narrow streets were many, and every building was made of baked clay, for there was little stone in the land, and where long and long since had waved uncounted trees now waved the heavy-eared grain. The houses where the people dwelled were small and low. The house where the king dwelled was not high, but huge of breadth, and brazen-gated. Likewise the houses of the gods were huge, wherever they rose in the city. And hugest of all, huge as two or three of the others put together, covering no mere hands' breadth of earth floor, spread the house of Marduk, son of Ea, once god of this city only, now strongest god of many gods in a wide land.

Many-courted and many-roomed was the house of Marduk.

A blue sky hung over Babylon, and the sun rode in strength with Marduk and with Sharrâni the king. The sun and Marduk and Sharrâni the king were somehow one. . . .

Temple wall, palace wall, walls of tall gateways had a

strange and effective decoration of glazed tiles coloured blue and red and white and black and yellow. On the tiles were painted, colour against colour, huge winged men, genii, together with great beasts, unicorns, lions, bulls. Repeated and repeated, these became processions, troops of creatures inside and outside temple and palace. Sometimes, in the heated, quivering air, they seemed to palpitate, to move in their places.

The vast house of Marduk, thus coloured and adorned, reared itself from a yet vaster platform of earth and brick. Beside it, within the wide temple enclosure, rose higher and higher yet, the "mountain of the god," the tower of seven stages. Each stage spread wider, rose taller than the next that was built upon it, until at the top was only the chamber of the god and the pathway around, and each stage was mounted by an outward stair, a broad, gradual and parapetted ascent, and each stage contained a ritual number of rooms, looking out upon a surrounding, guarded walkway. From top to bottom the wall space glowed with those coloured tile-pictures, with winged genii, trees of life, bull and lion and dragon. The sunshine of Babylon lit them as with fire behind; in the moonlight of Babylon they still showed. Then they were faintly-hued, but they seemed vaster and more solemn than in the daytime. The "mountain of the god," the "lofty house of Marduk," sprang two hundred feet and more above the low roofs of Babylon. From its stages was watched the life of the city, the movements on the plain, the glittering presence and solemn actions of sun, moon and stars.

Iltani, the mother of Iltani, had died at Iltani's birth. Lugal-naid, her father, had taken another wife, Ramtû, who was kind enough to Iltani, but a passionate and cruel

mistress to Ina-banat and Belatum, slaves and concubines of Lugal-naid. Iltani dwelled in the house with the three women, and now took the side of one and now of another, though for the most part secretly. Evil would it be if any of the three, conceiving dislike to her, should blacken her forehead in the sight of her father who owned her to do what he would with her! Lugal-naid was not unkind, and Iltani fetched and carried for him, and regarded him with awe, and with pride in his weight among the people, for he was superintendent of the temple granaries.

"Iltani is leaving childhood," said Ramtû to Lugal-naid.

"Let her be a little longer," answered Lugal-naid. "She is use and ornament in the house."

Iltani grew for another year. "O Lugal-naid, you must be thinking what you will do with Iltani!"

"I will think," said Lugal-naid.

"There is Ninmar, son of Ur-Enlil —"

"I will think," said Lugal-naid.

On the other side of Euphrates flowing through Babylon, dwelled the brother of Lugal-naid, Ibni-Shamash, who had an office in the king's palace. Ibni-Shamash had sons and two daughters, Innina-nûri and Tuda-Ishtar. The latter were older than Iltani, who had child's admiration for them and their ways and adornments. Ibni-Shamash gave Innina-nûri for wife to Nanâ-iddin, son of the assistant of the under-governor.

That had been in the spring time when the plain was green and there were blossoms in every garden. When it was autumn, and all the land was brown and dry and the heart longed for rain, Iltani heard Ramtû and Ina-banat and Belatum talking all together.

It seemed that Innina-nûri was doing wrong. . . . It seemed that Nanâ-iddin was going to accuse her before the judges in the temple court. . . . It seemed that all the kindred of Ibni-Shamash were deeply concerned. It seemed that they were angry with Innina-nûri, that they sent and exhorted her, even pleaded with her. . . . It seemed that Innina-nûri had listened, though with the air of the skies in rain and storm, and at last, pushed against by all, had bowed her head before Nanâ-iddin. . . . It seemed that there had followed a time of stillness and that the kindred all had congratulated themselves. . . . It seemed that then, suddenly, with a crash, all was wrong again! Nanâ-iddin and his father the assistant of the under-governor were gone to the judges, who summoned before them Innina-nûri.

A wind ran through the houses of Ibni-Shamash's kindred. Iltani, too, heard the wind.

"*Justice of Marduk and the King. Innina-nûri, that will not be wife to her husband, Nanâ-iddin, shall be thrown into the river. . . . Mercy of Marduk and the King. Two days are given to Innina-nûri for repentance and returning to Nanâ-iddin.*"

"O women!" said Lugal-naid when he returned to his house that eve. "See what comes of wrong-doing!"

On a summer day, some time after Innina-nûri returned finally to Nanâ-iddin, Iltani went with Ramtû across the river to Ibni-Shamash's house to see Gin-Enlil his wife and Tuda-Ishtar that was not yet wed. The year before, Tuda-Ishtar was, indeed, to have been given for wife to a very fine young man, son of one in favour with the King. But in a war with Elam the man had been killed. And now Tuda-Ishtar would not be wed until the savour of his

death was gone from the general mind. Tuda-Ishtar was beautiful, and who took her would give Ibni-Shamash a good price, and out of this Ibni-Shamash would give to Tuda-Ishtar herself garments, two slave women and a wheat field.

Ramtû and Iltani found at Ibni-Shamash's door slaves waiting, staves in hand. They had in keeping an ass with an embroidered cloth upon its back, and strung along the bridle rein little silver bells. "For whom is all this?" asked Ramtû. "For Tuda-Ishtar, mistress," answered the old man, the head slave.

Ramtû and Iltani, entering the house, met there an air of business and excitement. Gin-Enlil and Lamazi, wives of Ibni-Shamash, and a dozen handmaids were gathered in the next to the greatest room in the house about Tuda-Ishtar who stood in the middle of the floor. They were putting upon Tuda-Ishtar fine garments and ornaments of gold and silver and gems. Tuda-Ishtar was more beautiful than ever for there was a red stain upon her lips and cheeks and her eyes were quite like stars, and on her head was a curious, crown-like headdress.

When Ramtû saw this she smote her hands together and cried: "Why did you not send word that Tuda-Ishtar was going to-day to the temple of Mylitta? I would have brought her my chain that I wore the day I sat beneath the palm trees! — You, also, were there that day, Gin-Enlil!"

"Yes. Twenty years ago. . . . We did not have to return, Ramtû, day after day, like some we know!"

"By Ishtar, no! — And Tuda-Ishtar will not have to return, nor, indeed, have to wait at all! The first man that sees her — the bee and the honey-bloom! — You should have let us know!"

"She would go now and have it over with, and her debt to Mylitta paid. — After all, even though we are told it is a high duty, a woman wants the day behind her and out of mind!"

Iltani, going home with Ramtû, crossing the river in a boat, looked at the walls of the temple of Mylitta. There could be made out the court, surrounded by palm trees, where, for one time in her life, every woman of Babylon, saving only priestesses and votaries of a god, must sit until there came some man, no matter whom, who dropped a piece of silver in her lap. Then would the woman rise and go away with the man and pay her debt to Mylitta, keeping the silver piece ever after to show clearance.

The young Iltani saw behind her forehead Tuda-Ishtar sitting there under palm trees. They said that she would not have long to wait. That was because she was beautiful. Everybody admired that in Tuda-Ishtar, and served her because of it.

The young Iltani did not think of all that; she only saw a picture of her cousin sitting under the palm trees, and of a man coming near and then standing still before Tuda-Ishtar. Her fancy made the man young, and also beautiful. . . . Iltani looked at the palm tree and the blue sky behind them, and then she looked over the side of the boat at her own image in the still water. When she had regarded the image for some moments, she glanced aside at Ramtû. She longed that Ramtû should say to her, "Why you, too, Iltani, are beautiful!" But Ramtû talked to the boatman of the price of food. . . .

Iltani grew apace. Said Ramtû to Lugal-naid, "What will you do with this girl? Younger than she have sat their day in the temple of Mylitta! And Ninmar has

wed Belignunu! — Do you mean to present Iltani to the god?"

"That is what I intend," said Lugal-naid. "It is an old oath that I swore if I prospered. I waited to see if I did so prosper. This year I am made superintendent of superintendents. Now Iltani shall become bride of Marduk!"

Iltani went with all her ornaments to the temple of Marduk. She went not unhappily, though she wept at parting with Ramtû, Ina-banat and Belatum. She was going to a life of honour that, so far as it went, and did she always follow righteousness, would reflect honour upon her kindred. A votary of Marduk gave up certain sweetnesses in life, but also she found others. Iltani's kindred and their friends brought her in procession to the temple. Priests and priestesses ritually met her, Lugal-naid ritually renounced his part in her to the god, her dower that she brought was ritually spread around her, music was made, incense hung in the air. . . .

That had been some months ago. Now that part of the huge temple which she inhabited was familiar to Iltani. Familiar were the rooms and rooms within rooms, the courts in sun and shade, the rites and duties, service of the temple, spirit of the hive!

Huge was the temple, many were its inmates, multifarious its activities. The god and the king who ruled under his shield so merged that the king was half-divine and the god more than half-royal. All life moved under the glance of the god and his fingers pushed it here, withdrew it there, or, resting underneath, held it steadfast. The fingers of the god, clothed in flesh, became his most numerous priesthood. Learning was of the god, judgement and law were of

the god, administration was of the god, though the king was named with him.

Marduk was served by a mighty host of priests. Priestesses there were also and in number, but by no means in so great a number. But men and women together, his servants swarmed in his enormous temple. The people likewise filed or poured through the long series of temple rooms and passageways and small and large courts. The people came to the temple for knowledge, for law, for healing, for divination, for exorcism of the innumerable evil ones, for directions as to paths through every thorny desert, for comfort, for glow, for subtle excuses, for life anew, for spiritual wine, and for direct, practical, everyday business. They brought covenanted-for produce of every description, they poured into the temple treasury the temple-tax, that was a broad and deep and continuing stream.

Much life was there, centring in, flowing through the temple, for any to view who had vision, and to grow by who had the seed of growth.

The priestesses of the temple taught, judged, divined, exorcised, healed, performed work of scribe and notary, directed, executed, much as did the priests, and as well. They received honour as did the priests. From their status there fell a fairly broad shaft of warmth and light upon all women of their land. In Egypt, too, fell by the goddess-way a certain light and warmth and colour upon the entire mother hemisphere. In Egypt there was Isis, in Babylonia, Ishtar. And all the Babylonian gods had consorts, goddesses with powers and with devotees. There was Ninlil for Ea, and Antum for Anu, and Sarpanit for Marduk.

That was all true. Yet all was in the convention. Ishtar, indeed, remained dimly, hugely, outside, but Ishtar to an extent undefined, general, like the air that you breathed without thinking of it. But all the others were as wives of men, honourable, free in much, in much powerful, but with distinctness secondary. All men and gods, by virtue of manship, rose by a head above women and goddesses. That was held to be the nature of things, fundamental and unalterable. Faint, old trails of old, old story, old, inexplicable customs resting like crones in nooks and corners, might breathe of a time when the indubitable truth was hardly so firmly established. But the time must have been ancient, ancient! Now ever the truth seemed to grow more established.

The young Iltani came to a wide corner of the temple quarter, rooms below, small, low rooms above, twisting, outside stairs, passageways, large court and small courts, and in the central court a well and old trees. In many places the walls, within and without, had those great pictures of gods and goddesses and sacred beasts and all their huge adventure. It was like living, in a far later time, with a child's gay picture book or blocks. In the long hot summer, these pictures struck like brands upon the tissues of the mind. In the short, chill winter, with their red and their yellow, they gave out warmth and light.

Inmates of this part of the temple, and they were many, were not at all without steady, even employment. The whole, huge place worked, religion being so official, Marduk so actually pervading all that the land knew of the actual. . . . Iltani found herself with others under the orders of the votary Â-rishat, who kept the room where were kept the clay tablets upon which were written, week by week,

the simpler annals of the house of the women of the deity. Iltani had been taught to write. Now with a bride of Marduk a little older than herself, she copied defective tablets upon fresher clay. She worked in a little room from which one stepped into a little court in which there grew a great and old fig tree.

Amat-Tashmit loved to talk. When the votary Â-rishat was near, when other, older votaries passed or stood talking among themselves, the two novices were silent enough. But when none was by, Amat-Tashmit talked, and Iltani also, though less than the other.

Amat-Tashmit, having had the longer residence here, could instruct her sister in devotion. Iltani learned the round of life, so far as Amat-Tashmit had trodden it or could report upon others' treading. Iltani heard from Amat-Tashmit of the idiosyncrasies of her many and many companion votaries of Marduk. There was a votary of Marduk for every day and night of Marduk's year. And Amat-Tashmit talked of the bands and bands of priests, the huge number of servants of Marduk. She talked of individual priests of fame, persons of high rank in the court of Marduk. When she spoke of these reverence sat upon her tongue and in the ears of Iltani. But she talked also of priests of no especial fame whom she had chanced to observe. The most of these were young — young men under guidance in the house of Marduk. It was all harmless talk enough that Amat-Tashmit made, but around it and through it ran a haunting warmth and colour.

Matters of fact, serenely accepted as the right and proper will of the god, the king and all Babylon, came also into the talk of the two. As they worked they might look up from the clay and from the fine wedge-shaped stylus

which each used, look up and forth, and beyond the fig tree see the "mountain of the god," the tower, rising by stages high, high against the blue heaven. They saw the broad, winding way leading from stage to stage, and the figures, small at that distance, ascending, descending, ascending. And they might see the chamber atop, room and shrine of Marduk, high up, high up, goal of the seven stairs! The light struck against the bright pictures of the chamber's outer walls. Sometimes the tower top dazzled like the sun, sometimes it was rosy or golden, a star of morn or eve.

Iltani with Amat-Tashmit watched with a kind of fascination this tower of seven levels, one above the other. It was the "mountain of the god." Within that topmost room stood the great figure of the god, overlaid with gold, and all around were ranged the most precious votive figures, figures given by kings and by the queens of kings. And in the room was the bed of the god, hung with gold, the bed of Marduk, god of gods, whom to serve was honour and felicity, whom to represent was honour and felicity, the bed of Marduk and the goddess Sarpanit, his spouse.

Each day the novices saw borne around the tower and upward the votary whose name was set against that day in the year of Marduk. She was borne in procession, with music and song. The two watched her and that sister throng mount from stage to stage. Arrived upon the seventh the company circled three times the mountain-top. Then the bride of Marduk went alone into the freshly swept and garlanded Marduk-room. The two watching from the court of the fig tree might see the company part from her it had brought, reabsorb into itself the votary whose place she took, whose day this year was passed, and

again with music descend the spiral way. The day went. Iltani and Amat-Tashmit, working with stylus and clay, gave not much thought to the tower and the votary who praised Marduk alone in the chamber where was reared the great gold-covered image.

But when the rays of the sun were slant they stepped from their own small room into the court of the fig tree, for they heard trumpets and knew that the priest who that night would represent the god now went to the mountain-top. Small figures in the distance, they saw him and the band that bore him thither. The strong chanting of the priests came to them, the light glinted upon the lifted, waved, gilded, many-shaped symbols and insignia of Marduk. They watched this company also from stage to stage, to the tower height, watched the company part there from the human Marduk, watched it descend in the red sunset light. . . . Up there the votary was no longer alone. Up there were Marduk and Sarpanit.

The days passed, the weeks and the months. The temple, or her corner of the temple, grew home-like to Iltani. Around her were much folk and manifold business. She laboured with others, rested and played, ate and drank and slept in a field of crowded bloom, of a thousand bees that gathered honey. All was under rule, all that was done was done ritually, arrows drawn to hit the sun. But many had forgotten the aim of the arrows. The marked rhythm pleased Iltani. Her body seemed to move with it, and that within her body, the worker that had spun the body from itself. . . .

Amat-Tashmit had been given by her parents to the god some months before the coming of Iltani. Now Amat-Tashmit was shown her name written against such a day

"for the holy room in the lofty house of Marduk." Even the seeing of her name written made a gala day for the votary concerned. That day she was excused from work, she was served first at meal time, she was given a wreath of flowers. The next day she went to a range of rooms across the great court of the well and the trees. There, for so many days, would be training, instruction, purification, lasting until the day they adorned her and bore her with timbrel and song to the door of Marduk. As, every day, through the year of Marduk there wound the procession to the "mountain of the god," so, every day, there moved through the courts of the votaries a woman crowned with flowers. . . . Iltani watched with a thrill Amat-Tashmit set the flower wreath upon her head.

The next day Amat-Tashmit was gone across the court of the well. Iltani, alone, copied accounts in the small room behind the great tree.

The thrill did not go away. Behind it arose a strange feeling that turned the tree into a forest through which Iltani wandered. The young Iltani, for all her copper-coloured hair, could not remember ever once having been in any forest, but that was what she felt. She worked all day in a dream; whether she sat alone, or found the humming of other women about her, in a dream. When the sun's rays came slant and the trumpets blew Iltani turned face to the tower, and through her poured and thrilled and pulsed something new in the forest that seemed to turn red and purple and splendid.

At night, lying awake in a room with many young, sleeping women, the glow seemed to Iltani to pass into glory. . . . In the morning one of her companions said to her, "You look differently!"

That day the votary Â-rishat installed beside her two writers upon clay, and there was no more loneliness in that kind. But Iltani wandered in the forest of the inner world.

Lugal-naid had brought her to the temple in the spring of the year. She had been given in the days just following the New Year high festival, the god day of god days, the day when Marduk and Sarpanit remembered and celebrated their eternal wedding, immortal, without beginning, without ending, the day when out of his power and bliss Marduk portioned, for the year to come, the lot of mankind, the high day, rising like a tower out of ten preceding, marked days during which Babylonia remembered its sins and cleansed its heart, the day of the Sun when he put off his winter mourning. All the rest of the year fell away from that shining point, then turned upon itself and climbed again to the golden mark. Six months it fell away, six months it climbed. . . . The wreathed day, the high day, looked forward to by all Babylon, the huge festival, the day of mystic union and good omen, the day when to serve Marduk was fame and joy, Marduk who came in fulness of power, raying light. . . .

To Iltani the votary the forest seemed to fill with light, rose light. Within it sprang desire like a strong tree, desire to be the Sarpanit of that day.

So high an honour was the dream, the aspiration, vague or distinct of every maiden in the house of the women. It was ever a maiden, chosen halfway in the year, in the autumn, then at once set aside, honoured, instructed, purified, made beautiful within and without against that high New Year day. There were many in the continually fed house of the women who might have that dream. Iltani, daughter of Lugal-naid, knew no reason why Iltani should be chosen.

But now, day and night, she saw before her the winged Marduk, shining one, god of gods! Desire held her, to be, that day, of the mountain-top. It sprang like a strong tree in the rose-lit forest, or rather it stood the forest itself. . . .

Day after day went by, and here was autumn. The votary A-rishat spoke to Iltani. "The rulers of the temple sit to-day in the room of the lion. You and twenty more are chosen to pass before them."

Priests and priestesses, chiefs in sanctity, sat in the room of the lion. Iltani saw them as huge veiled forms, guardians of the way to Marduk, god of gods, raying light —

Three days, and she went again to the room of the lion. One day more, and voices told her that Iltani, daughter of Lugal-naid, was chosen for the New Year Sarpanit. With trumpets it was proclaimed in the temple. Babylon knew it presently. . . . Lugal-naid gave a feast.

Iltani went to a part of the temple mass that was called the house of the New Year, and to a room therein that was named the room of Sarpanit. This chamber was built high, and it gave upon the flat roof of a congeries of attendant rooms. Upon the roof stood great earthen jars, filled with growing plants, and around it ran a brick parapet. The outer wall of the Sarpanit room was overpainted with a great tree of life, and beside it, tall as the tree, the winged Marduk. The whole faced the east, and when the sun had passed the zenith, stood in the shadow of the "mountain of the god."

From autumn to spring, throughout the winter that knew rain but not snow, the New Year votary dwelled in the Sarpanit room, dwelled watched by aged women who were now but as doorkeepers and gardeners in the great house of the god, dwelled subject to much instruction by

votary and priestess, efficient, famed, appointed to that service, dwelled in the midst of Sarpanit rites, a being set apart in the hive, symbolically, esoterically, the hive itself.

Iltani lived six months in the Sarpanit room. When the rains fell a great brazier filled with coals cast a dull glow upon pictured walls. When the sky cleared and the sun shone out, she might spend hours upon the roof warmed by the sun that again was Marduk. At night she might be a watcher of the stars.

She faced the "mountain of the god." If it rained, a silver veil fell between her and it, or there was reared a leaden wall. If the weather was bright, all its colours dazzled. In moonshine and starshine it seemed to go yet higher, up among the stars.

Every morning she heard music and singing voices and watched the day's votary mount to the seventh stage. When the sun's rays came slant she heard the trumpets and watched the mounting priest of Marduk. When the dark came there was a lamp there, far above, in the Marduk-room. . . . The priest of the New Year. . . . She knew that he would be chosen for beauty and strength.

Iltani sat beneath the parapet of the roof by the Sarpanit room. It was night, mild as a spring night of more northern lands. The stars were shining. A young moon gave pale light. The beams fell against the tiled outer wall of the room and showed the huge, pictured forms.

Marduk was winged. He rose tall, tall and full of might! In his face, in his form was what majesty, what beauty the art of Babylonia could put there. He stood winged, his hand upon the tree of life.

Iltani had looked at him so long, saying, "God, God!" to herself, that now the wings and the crowned head seemed

to rise among the stars, to rise from earth and become the firmament, the firmament overshadowing, upholding, to be worshipped, and only that to be worshipped. . . . Iltani of her own motion, bowed herself together, touched her forehead to the ground.

Ishtar! . . . She did not know why Ishtar, not Sarpanit, should come into her mind — save that Ishtar was in some way Mother Earth and all that grew, and dimly, dimly very great! Ishtar was mother and children, bearing and growing. . . .

But Iltani looked again at Marduk, and was wrapped in magic, fold on fold.

Spring came upon the plains that stretched from Euphrates. Verdure and flowers arose from the dark. The watchers of the stars in the high house of Marduk sent word to the king, and the king proclaimed the word to the people. In the heavens was written the sign that meant rich harvests at home, and abroad, in the king's wars, victory. Marduk had thrown, before his coming, a handful of jewels. At that the city so rejoiced that the nine days before the high days that were officially days of supplication, repentance and cleansing of heart, humbling and propitiation, went themselves like festival.

In the house of Sarpanit the New Year votary was watched, tended, made in all ways beauteous. . . . Marduk, coming in power, must find a Sarpanit also in power, kindler of desire!

Babylon, in fresh heat, under a sky from which had passed all the rain clouds, put on holiday garb. The people thronged the temple courts, coming in groups and bands and processions, bringing the sacrifices. There was heard, as on no other day, the bleating of sheep, the lowing of

cattle, the voices of doves. King Sharrâni came in procession, with clangour and throb of instruments of music, with shouts of the populace. The gods from their lesser temples came in procession to visit Marduk, god of gods. Priest-borne, newly-decked, came the images by the Sacred Street, came to huge chanting, to the bowing of the throng. From the pictured walls looked the pictured genii, the pictured sacred beasts, the pictured gods.

Babylon and the brimming river Euphrates and the plain that was to thicken with wheat and barley, millet and sesame, waked through the starlight of the night before the day. Cresset lamps burned in doorways, the young men surged, singing, through the streets. Waned the spring night, arose a breath of balm and spice, came the light in the east. Trumpets blew from the city wall, trumpets blew from the king's palace, trumpets blew from the temple roofs. Dawned the high day of the round year, the day when Marduk returned to his house in a golden mantle of strength! The children and all the people leaped up to festival. When Marduk the sun rose from where he slept, beyond Tigris, east of India, he was met with ecstasy. All day Marduk the sun rained light upon Babylonia, upon Babylon, and light intense upon his temple there. As ever, on the New Year day, were found men and women who claimed to see the winged Marduk, hovering in the heavens, above his lofty house. . . .

At an early hour in the day the women votaries of the high god came with music, with garlands, with burning frankincense, to the Sarpanit-room in the shadow of the tower. They took Iltani and robed her in fine white figured with gold. They put a veil upon her like the mist upon the morning plain, and over it a twisted circlet of

silver and gold. They took her from the Sarpanit-room and in the court they placed her at the head of their band, with only musicians going before her. They gave into her hand a stalk with two flowers, they raised over her a red canopy. The music swelled, the voices rose. In a blue, upcurling, incense cloud, Iltani set her foot upon the broad, the worn, the clay and fire made tower stair.

Stage by stage, stage by stage, and the city was below her and the thronged and throbbing temple courts. Stage by stage, and a gulf of blue light, thrilling, tingling was around. It weighed her down, it upheld her. She looked to the sky and thought that she saw Marduk, winged, coming from the sun.

The procession returned to the court whence sprang the tower. All day the temple, all day the king and his chief men, all day Babylon and all Babylonia praised Marduk and did rites before him. All day Marduk was to be felt above the city, the river, the plain, above the temple quarter and its smoking altars, above the tower, the "mountain of the god." All day the human Sarpanit awaited alone the slant rays of the sun and the human Marduk.

Symbols — symbols that were warm and glowed. . . . Iltani-Sarpanit sat in the gold-furnished temple room in the prescribed attitude of devotion. She sat still, and light and fire ran through her being. Marduk — Marduk — Marduk!

The sun's rays came slant. At the mountain-top, she heard at the mountain foot, trumpets blowing. . . . She veiled her eyes, she quivered. All at once, her strong dream of ecstasy parted a little. . . . This was a man coming to the mountain-top, a man as she was a woman. Terror

threatened, a depth of headlong fall. *O God, my God! O Marduk, raying light!*

The lover was the winged Marduk — never, never must she lose him! . . . The trumpets were more loudly blowing, and now she might hear rising to her the strong chanting, the rhythmic tread. There was an altar in the room, and upon it a burning fire. Now she rose and, as she had been taught to do, heaped this with the richest spices, with sandalwood and frankincense. The room filled with thin clouds, blue and fragrant, and in the heart of these stood Iltani, and her soul beat about to repel the terror and keep the ecstasy.

Lugal-naid, and Ibni-Shamash and Nanâ-iddin, Ramtû, Ina-banat and Belatum, Innina-nûri, Tuda-Ishtar — teachings formal and informal, conscious, unconscious, word of mouth and blow from hand, long, long, long impressions, tellings and tellings and tellings, repetitions, as it were, before she was born, and repetitions after she was born — very much and very strong drew to themselves, whelmed and coloured the soul of the votary. . . . Iltani would have still the ecstasy, the abandonment, the feeling of god-presence. *If he were not the god, make him such — make him such! Perhaps he was the god — perhaps he was* — With man and woman man was highest always — Man was highest — Lugal-naid said it, Ramtû, Ina-banat, Belatum said it! Man was highest — man to woman was as god to votary!

She would not lose the winged Marduk, and she could not believe in her own wings. So she spread the burning frankincense, and she turned the altar of the god somewhat from the east, and in the blue smoke now rising, now flattened to right or left, now rolling downward, she, of her

own movement, touched her forehead to the earth and beheld man as god.

The human Marduk, too, was young and chosen for beauty and strength. . . .

CHAPTER IX

GLAUCON AND MYRINA

GLAUCON, the statesman and soldier, walked homeward from the Prytaneum where the city had received certain strangers of note, envoys to Athens. With him moved Theodorus the sculptor, and behind the two several attendant slaves. The air was fine, with a breeze from the sea. Theodorus made his companion remark the light that fell upon Mount Lycabettus. Glaucon looked and said that the effect was good, but said it in a tone of abstraction. His mind was yet in the Prytaneum, engaged with his speech that the occasion had prompted. Glaucon's phrases yet echoed in Glaucon's ears. They had been good phrases and Glaucon thought them good. He would have judged "sententious" and "strong" to be applicable words. Those, and "at times eloquence, like the light upon Mount Lycabettus." Yet was the statesman Glaucon by no means impudent of his merit nor a common braggart. He had spoken well and for the right as he saw it, and he saw more than many. And behind what Glaucon said stood, for men to see, many known courageous acts of Glaucon.

The two lived near the Diomean Gate. Now, making way through the crowded streets, the hour being one when men were abroad, they reached a palæstra and saw about to enter several of their acquaintance — Lycias the poet, Ion, Lysander, Hippodamus, and others. These called to the two to enter also and observe Thracian wrestlers. All

went in together and, mingled with a crowd, watched the mighty-thewed. When the match was over the group, leaving the palæstra, but still talking of the body and its powers, went along until there was reached the small temple of Hestia. Here the steps rose invitingly free of the crowd, and the space between the pillars smiled and invited. The light yet shone upon the mountains and upon the temples of the Acropolis. Lycias and Theodorus would pause and in the porch of Hestia continue the conversation while observing the beauty of the evening. Glaucon remarked that he had business at home. "Let it take its rest!" said Lycias. "You are a poet, also, Glaucon, and a painter and a maker of statues — just as I converse familiarly with envoys and undoubtedly fought at Megara, though I cannot just now recall having done so! Every man sacrifices in every temple. Stay and put up your hands to beauty, and let business go throw herself down from the wall!"

"He was only a moment ago a poet," said Theodorus. "You should have heard him at the Prytaneum upon Justice!"

They turned into the porch of Hestia. Despite the light upon the temples, and despite the interposed action of the wrestling match, Glaucon, in an inner voice, was yet saying over this or that part of the Prytaneum speech. The difference lay in the fact that he was now saying them over to Myrina.

"An encomium?" asked Ion.

"You would have thought it a voice from the Golden Age!"

Glaucon's ears and at last Glaucon's mind caught the statement of Theodorus and were pleased thereby. He

turned from the praise-honey that Myrina would serve to the immediate feast.

"I love to hear," said Hippodamus, "lovers speak of love, poets of poetry, physicians of healing, soldiers of soldiering, and legislators of the relations between states and among men."

"Oh!" cried Lycias. "Glaucon is a lover, too."

"Who is the youth?" asked Ion.

Laughter arose. "Ion is newly come to town — he does not know! Address your question, Ion, to Glaucon."

"I will save him the trouble, Lycias," said Glaucon. "Know, Ion, that I am like the barbarians and hold in hatred affection in that kind."

"But say to Glaucon the word Myrina —"

"Who is Myrina?"

"Myrina is a woman. — Lysander the silent, have you seen the new colonnade by the temple of Æsculapius?"

"Knock! Knock!" quoth Lycias. "Doorkeeper and dog say 'Not at home!' — Now, in the speech at the Prytaneum — Oh, here he is at home! Oh, voice from the Golden Age, discourse to us anew of Justice!"

"I said of Justice," answered Glaucon, "what a man of knowledge should say."

"He will not tell! — Veil your face, O Glaucon, for I am not modest for my friend! — Diocles and Timotheus overcrowed the envoys with the glories of the Athenian state. They sat with a downward look, and saw on the earth their bound hopes. Then arose Glaucon, and Apollo inspired him."

"Fighting for the envoys and their country?"

"By Apollo!" said Glaucon, "fighting for the right of things!"

"First, good as any rhapsode, he gave five lines from Homer! Then he spoke of his own motion, or of Apollo's motion. He would have Justice reign over the countries of men, and none take advantage of his neighbour!"

"Hmmm!"

"So sounded the Prytaneum. — I find that I cannot give all his arguments, but they were good ones. There was opposition — not from the envoys; they breathed softly and seemed to feel the warmth of the sun after winter — but Diocles and Timotheus and their following drove in in a mighty counter-current. Then might you have seen Odysseus fight the seas!"

"Justice —"

"Later he brought in friendship and alliance, and the love of a friend for the true and the beautiful in his friend, and the friend's desire that always his friend should lift with him. So that, climbing the mountain, one should not cry down to another, 'Lo, now the sea opens before me! lo, now I see all Hellas!' while the other cries sorrowfully up to him, 'Still am I in the woods and briars and among the caves!' He made application to states."

"By Ares!" interrupted Hippodamus, "that is not the way I look at it!"

"No, Hippodamus. But that makes appeal to Glaucon. He made application to states, and, inspired by Apollo, he laid down a principle. The true lover of man will have man free and noble wherever he be found. The true statesman wishes as much for every state."

"Father Zeus!" cried Hippodamus, "would you have Sparta, who is already as brave, become as wise as we? This little, weak country does not matter, but Sparta —!"

"I am not speaking, Hippodamus, but Glaucon — Glau-

con speaks. 'The great friend, that is to say t
statesman, denies to none place and garlands! F
none, "Lie forever on the mat at my door, be fo
at my heels!"' Says Glaucon, 'Shall a state with
dom from another state, leaving it dark of kno
that that state no longer knows how best to h
Shall a state be jealous of wisdom in a fellow state
state turn aside from its fellow the rivers of wealth? Shall it say, "Mine are all the rivers! Not for you ease of your own!" Shall a state desire to soften the body of its fellow? Shall it say, "Not for you gymnastic nor the diet of the strong! So, if we come to battle, you will not see the glint of any god's eye, standing in your ranks! No! But you shall shamefully flee, and I will have you in laughter, and my heart will swell with pride where I stand fast." Shall a state work that, or wish to work that, toward its fellow? Shall a state say to its fellow, "Be fair for me, send me dancers and flute-players, send me grapes from your vineyards and wine from your wine presses, be for me rich views and pleasant ports, grow wheat for me, send me marble out of which I may carve the forms of the gods, but move not of yourself nor for yourself! Be much if you will, but be not free!" — O Apollo! O Apollo! Thy arrow that is drawn against that thus-speaking state was made by Justice in her deep cave at the head of the world! Turn — turn — turn, thus-speaking state! Make libations, pray for nobility!'"

Theodorus the sculptor looked again at the light upon Mount Lycabettus. "Something like that was what Glaucon said."

Lycias spoke. "By Pallas, a good speech! — But now propound — Does Athens take into alliance the country that sent the envoys?"

Said suddenly Lysander the silent: "I came by the cross streets from the Agora and overtook an acquaintance who had been at the Prytaneum in the train of the Archon Timotheus. He said that he would stake his fortune that Athens would do no such thing!"

"Father Zeus! I should think not!" said Hippodamus.

"Oh, then," said Lycias, "Glaucon spoke in a dream to dream-listeners!"

Glaucon looked at the light that was now but a thin crown upon the mountains. "I think that I was dreaming," he said. "I have strange dreams sometimes!" He gathered his mantle about him. — "Theodorus, are you for home?"

The two left the porch and, the slaves attending, went away in the purple twilight toward the Diomean Gate. Lycias and the others followed them with their eyes.

"Who is Myrina?" again asked Ion the stranger.

"How short a while have you been in Athens! — Myrina! Ask the first street urchin you meet! He will say to you: 'O Arcadian, for sense and wit the hetæræ are among women as is Hellas among countries! As is Athens to other cities of the Hellenes so is Myrina (and one or two others) among the hetæræ. For the rest,' continues your urchin, 'she is now the mistress of Glaucon the statesman.'"

"Is Glaucon wived?"

"'O thou Arcadian!' says the street urchin, shaking his finger, 'what of that? Know, O woodland stranger, that wives are to bear us children that we may reasonably believe to be our own, and likewise to keep in order our houses. Hetæræ are for delight. Shall not a Hellene have children, house-order, and delight?' Then will he gather his rags together and depart, shaking his head."

"Let us, too, depart," said Lysander the silent. "The

light is fading, and there is a mist gathering over the earth."

In the mean time Glaucon and Theodorus pursued their way along a street not now so crowded. "Why do you not sup with Myrina?" asked the sculptor.

"That is for to-morrow. — To-night there is drudgery at home. I have made a trading venture to Egypt and to-night the master of the ship is to meet me and give account."

"Cannot Cleita —?"

"Cleita! — No, she keeps household accounts, but this is man's work."

They came, as they spoke, to the portico of Glaucon's house. Those that lounged there sprang up to greet the master; the doorkeeper opened both leaves of the door. The two entered, were brought water for hands and feet, had the dust brushed from their garments. A dog came and sprang upon Glaucon, giving welcome. The master enquired for supper. It was ready, and the two proceeded to the banquet-room. Presently came the master of the ship trading to Egypt. Glaucon had a couch placed for him. Moschus the shipmaster muttered something about plain men and being at a loss among gentlemen ways, then, taking the couch, reclined with an air of listening for the steersman's call. Supper was brought, and after food wine in a great cup. The talk was of the sea-master's adventures, for he was dead on other sides. But he could well discourse of these, and of ships and cargoes and harbour merchants, and he knew the middle sea from Tyre to the Pillars of Hercules, and had glimpsed the River-Ocean beyond. In his talk was spice of perils withstood, and of action in the breadths and narrows of the sea. Also, rich

terms of commerce rose like fair islets or played like dolphins.

Glaucon and Theodorus found enjoyment in the talk of Moschus, widening knowledge. "O Hermes!" cried Glaucon, "I think that I also have built a boat and adventured, and borne metals and weapons and oil and wine afar in trade! How good it is for man to widen until he brings all within his ring!"

Moschus at last produced his tablets and the talk fell to one voyage's profit and loss. Theodorus dozed over his wine. Then Moschus and Glaucon concluded their business, and Moschus, standing up, thanked Glaucon for good entertainment, and would go to his inn until dawn light upon the road to Phalerum. Shaking off sleep, Theodorus declared he would accompany him, for he had yet to hear about mermaiden. Sculptor and shipmaster went away together. Glaucon drank wine and talked with a trusted servant, then rising from the couch left the banquet-room and went to the women's part of the house. Here he found Cleita in tears.

He sat down beside her. "What is the matter, Cleita?"

Cleita continuing to weep, Gorgo her maid undertook to answer. "O Glaucon, my master, we do not know! I have asked her. Lycia here has asked her, Daphne has asked her. For a long time she has been pining — We would have her see the physician, but she says she has no suffering in her body —"

Cleita drew toward her a scarf of Egyptian linen and with it wiped her eyes. "I am tired of this house and these maids!"

"Do you wish to go out to the farm for a time?"

"I am tired of that house and those maids!"

"What, then, Cleita, do you wish to do?'

Cleita wept afresh. "O ye gods, I do not

Glaucon drew a breath and prayed for
a reasonable woman, Cleita! Discontent
ing why — wanting things without knowing
reason!"

Cleita raised her head. "All day you ha[illegible]en going up and down and to and fro! You have been entertained."

"Entertainment is not all in life, my Cleita."

"That, my master," said Gorgo, "is just what we have been telling her!"

"I never said that it was," said Cleita. She wrapped her head in the Egyptian scarf and again dropped it upon her arms.

Glaucon seriously considered her. "Have you not the children, Cleita? Have you not the management of the house?"

"That," said Gorgo, "is unanswerable!"

Glaucon sat upon the edge of the couch. "The gods, Cleita, have parted one way of life to women and another to men. Will you deny the gods wisdom? All of us, at times, know discontent. The soldier thinks his life hard, the statesman often would lay down his cares, the mechanic grumbles, the servant repines. But the gods have willed degrees and duties. If women — if Athenian wives and mothers — went abroad from the house, if they were seen by all men everywhere, if we met them in the streets, the market-place, the theatre, the school, the palæstra, where not, there would arise in the state great confusion! In a short while we should be no better than barbarians! But the gods have set comely bounds for women, as they have given to men freedom under the sky. Strive not against the

decrees of the gods! Cease this hungering and fretting for what is not good for you. There is impiety, O my Cleita, in your discontent!"

Gorgo drew a breath of rapture. "We do not need to go to Delphi!"

"Uncover your head, Cleita," said Glaucon. "Sit up and cease this weeping!"

Cleita lay still. Then she raised herself upon her elbow, and drew the linen a little aside. "Myrina —"

"O Eros, give me patience!" thought Glaucon. He stood up. "Myrina —?"

"Myrina lives free. The hetæræ have joy and light."

"I am speaking," said Glaucon, "not of hetæræ, but of Athenian wives and mothers." Cleita again sank her head. Glaucon, regarding her, strove at once to be master and wise. "You are a child, Cleita! If you smother there, you have yourself to thank!"

Nothing further coming from beneath the linen, he turned, after waiting until he was assured that it would come not, and left the gynecæum. Going, he said to himself, "She is a child! To-morrow I will buy her some basket or fan or piece of silk."

Once more in the banquet-room he sat down and fingered the tablets covered with the accounting of Moschus the shipmaster. At last he pushed these aside, and with his elbows upon the table brought together his hands and rested his brow upon them. "Myrina — Myrina — Myrina! Deep and flowing and ever about me like River-Ocean —"

Myrina, from her own house, bought with earned gold, watched, too, that day, the light upon Mount Lycabettus. She saw it caress the temples upon the Acropolis, and of the

great statue of Athena make a torch, a star, blazing gold. Myrina, walking in her garden, had driven a thorn into her unsandalled foot. After three days it yet troubled her, and this day she would go to the temple of Æsculapius. She went in an adorned litter, borne by slaves, her nurse beside her, behind her more slaves. The litter's curtains were partly drawn aside. Athens might see a beautiful woman within, and, coming closer, demanding of those who knew, learn that it was Myrina. . . . Respect — they gave it in seeming abundance. Here was a learned and fair and rich woman, with great men for lovers! Gradually there grew about and behind the moving litter a crowd of the well-beseen. Dion walked upon one side, Simonides upon the other. Myrina spoke of the thorn in her foot, and the temple of Æsculapius, and then of a new poet and a new song and a new statue and a new comedy. She had rich laughter; she span a ball of warmth, and far and wide made it, rose-hued, enclose herself and all that approached. When they came to the temple of Dionysus, Daphnis and Menalcas and Strephon joined the procession of the litter. When they came to the plane trees and the colonnade and the court of the temple of Æsculapius the slaves brought the litter close to the ground. Forth stepped Myrina and halted upon one foot. Arms were outstretched, Strephon's and Daphnis's eyes brightened, they flushed rosy-red when she rested hand upon either, used them as staves for support. Priests of Æsculapius came to meet the rich train. Here was an inner court where a fountain bubbled clearly and flowers diffused their odours, and here were seats of marble for patients of high note. Myrina sat, and her nurse, kneeling, drew off the sandal. The light struck upon and made bright copper of Myrina's red-brown head.

The physician came, examined the foot, at last drew out the troubling thorn. "By Pallas!" said Myrina, "that goes better! — I dreamed, last night, Hippias, an old dream of mine. I fought a beast with fire in a wood. What, servant of Æsculapius, do you think that that signifies?"

"I think that it signifies, Myrina, that you dreamed that you fought a beast with fire in a wood."

"Not so! I took the dream to a soothsayer. He asked me where I would go this day, and when I told him, he said that the wood signified the new colonnade, the beast the thorn in my foot, and the fire the art of Æsculapius. O Proteus's daughter, by name Interpretation! What marvels dost thou work!"

Myrina stood up. "Give me the pearl, Xanthus! Now will I go to the altar and make thank-offering."

The altar was reached and the altar was left by way of the main court with the colonnade around it, and all about, in the sun and in the shade, reclining or seated or standing, the many who would consult the servants of Æsculapius. Here were men and here were women, and the patients were attended by friends and kindred or by slaves. By all save the too much suffering the train of Myrina was watched across and across the temple court. Especially did Athenian wives and daughters watch the courtesan, watch with a keen and jealous look!

Myrina, going homeward, drew her train with her. It was then that she marked the light upon Mount Lycabettus. At her own portico she sent away the following. No, none might enter! She was not to-night for wine and song and flowers. The slaves bore her litter through the doors; the doorkeeper brought clangorously to the leaves, dropped in place the iron bars. Those who had convoyed

her home fell back, turned in the narrow street, and went off with grumbling, laughter, and singing. "Nowadays, nowadays, only Glaucon lives in the world!"

In her chamber, when the lights had been brought, Myrina said to the old woman, Phrygia, her nurse: "Athenians should teach their wives better manners! I feel as if I had been bathed in vinegar!"

"They are jealous, and they would be scornful," said Phrygia, fastening the sandal.

"Poor, dull, wing-clipped, house-kept wrens and sparrows!"

"You are proud and would be scornful!" said Phrygia.

"Is it not something to be not as they are?"

"A many women are slaves and poor," said old Phrygia. "And another many are these wives of free Hellenes, liking not bright birds loose in the barnyard, while they have a chain at the foot! And another many are the courtesans. But these struggle among themselves, and if their beauty goes not even their wit can save them."

"Mother Demeter! How many have beauty and wit?"

"Lo, you, now," said old Phrygia, "how the bright bird sings! Where the dark is for so many, can you hold the light?"

"Glaucon — Glaucon!"

"You care for naught beside if only you have Glaucon!"

"Is there aught beside?"

"Were all the world afire, so that the light made your toy to shine —! So have been others before you and will be after you, mistress!"

Myrina lay down to sleep amid lambs' wool and fine Egyptian linen. In the bright dawn she waked and lay

regarding from her warm bed the room that the dawn turned a pale rose. Out from the wall was placed a statue of the old-and-young god Eros, and it was a marvellous piece of work, and Myrina's eyes caressed it. The warmth of the bed was good, the clear rose feel of the room, the just-heard, slow breathing of the two slave-girls sleeping at the door. Myrina lay still and indolent. It was good not to have to go forth and fend for food, whether for yourself or for others. . . . Glaucon — Glaucon! . . . Warmth and idleness wove ten thousand magic chains.

Yesterday he had not come because he had been at the Prytaneum. Her mind opened upon that place. The Prytaneum . . . the House of the central hearth, of the sacred fire, the formal "Home" of the people. When colonies went forth the men took a brand from the hearth of the Prytaneum, kindled afar another hearth and built around it a Prytaneum. The City Hearth, Hall, Home — the Country Hearth — the Hearth and Middle Fire. . . . Myrina, lying in the room that was like a shell tossed upon a silver bank, filled only with the dream sound of dream tides, saw as it were the hearth afar, and the forms around it, that were all the forms of men, for men made that hearth to glow and burn.

Myrina turned upon her arm.

Later in the morning she rose and bathed, and the slave-girls put upon her a festival dress. To-day was to be held a celebration, choice and beautiful, before the Temple of Athena of the Victory. Myrina would go observe it, and perhaps afterwards for a little excursion beyond the walls, beside the shady Ilissus. Glaucon would not come till sunset — the day must somehow be passed!

Athena of the Victory and her throng helped by the

limping hours. When there was no more good to be gotten there Myrina proceeded in her litter, slave-borne, through the southern Gate, and so on to the cool, brown stream, plane- and olive-shaded. Here, descending from the litter, she sat upon a rich cloth that they spread for her beneath a tree, huge, with mossed trunk and branches where the cicadas were making music. With her were Dion and Simonides, Phrygia her nurse, and a Thessalian slave-girl. Dion had a roll overwritten with poems. He read, and they discussed the verses that were read.

Came by an unsandalled man with a grey beard, and gave them good-day beneath the tree. "Good-day, Myrina the fair woman!"

"Good-day, Myrrhus the philosopher! Will you drink with me a cup of wine?"

"That will I!" said Myrrhus, "and with thanks for the boon!"

The slaves poured the wine, and the philosopher drank. Said Myrina: "Dion and Simonides and I were disputing — Make me a gift in return, O Myrrhus, and answer three questions."

"If I may, I will, Myrina the fair. What is the first?"

"Why, Myrrhus, when the sculptors make great forms of goddesses who are women, and why, when the poets write with so great beauty of goddesses who are women, and why when all hearts grant to these, who are surely women, power and attributes, why do the Hellenes rate women so low?"

"Those others," said Myrrhus, "are Olympian women."

"Am I answered? — This is the second question. Does Æschylus speak truly for Apollo when he causes him to say —

"'The mother bears, but never truly makes the child,
Only the father makes'?"

"I, O Myrina, am not a poet but a philosopher. — So Æschylus said Apollo said. — Women cry to Demeter for many things, but never, that I heard of, for vengeance upon Æschylus! So, none objecting, it must be true."

The cicadas made music in the tree. Myrina regarded the dust at her feet. She laughed, a dry sound like the cicadas' tune. "Low things, rated lowly, put up low claims. — Give me wine, Xanthus."

Dion, who, an he might, would have had Glaucon's place, whispered to her, "You are not as other women, but sit among the Olympians."

Myrina drank wine, and drank self-praise and lover's praise, and laughed again, this time with loosened and golden throat. "Here, O Myrrhus, is the third and easy question! — What is wisdom?"

"Wisdom is to lift ourselves from ourselves. — And now, Myrina, having given gift for gift, I go on to the feast at the house of Callicles the sophist."

Myrina, too, looked at the sun. "It is in the Glaucon quarter!" she cried to herself. Going homeward, she seemed to listen, but was not listening to those beside her. "Glaucon — Glaucon — Glaucon — Glaucon —"

With the last light upon the mountains came Glaucon. Much Athenian business had filled his day, but now he was here, white-robed, garlanded and bright-eyed, with arms that strained, with lips that pressed. Myrina's arms strained back, Myrina's lips pressed his lips. "I love you!" said Myrina. "I love you!"

They sat in a flower-decked room, and though Myrina had flute-girls playing in the distance, and though slaves

came and went bringing dishes and wine, they heeded these not.

"I love you!"

"I love you!"

"I love you most!"

"No, I love you most!"

There was something in the word "most" that brought them back to it. That was when they had eaten, though sparingly, when dishes had been taken away but wine left, when the flute-girls cascading endlessly sweet sound, seemed to go farther away, when the slaves had been dismissed after bringing perfumed lamps, when there was before them the round dark pearl of the richer night.

"You love me not as I love you!"

"Ah, Glaucon! — Ah, Glaucon!"

"Did you love me as I love you — You were in my mind all day —"

"And were you not in my mind?"

"I know that you went to Athena of the Victory. And then you would fare farther forth, be a nymph of Ilissus —"

"Were you not in my mind for all that?"

"*No!* It is not so that you would take absence, did you love me truly!"

"Did you not do many things this day? Yesterday also? Yet you swear that you love me!"

"That is a man's work. That must go on. — But you, alas! You rove in a garden for pleasure!"

"You speak less than the truth!"

"Was not Dion beside you? By Hermes, I hear his footfall beside your litter!"

"If he was, what then? Am I not free?"

"Free? Who is free that loves? I have tied your chains about my heart. Drag free, if you can!"

"If I love you not, I am free!"

"So you love me not, but love Dion!"

"Take your hand from me! — What fiends are you men!"

"No! But you are fiends —"

"Loved — loved —"

"Loved —"

"Glaucon — Glaucon!"

"Myrina — Myrina — Myrina!"

The two embraced with a stormy passion. They held each other's hands. The fluting, fluting of the musicians, far among the columns, hidden by flowering bushes, sounded sweet as springtime on Olympus. "I have loved you from the first!" — "And I you!" — "I will love you always!" — "And I you!"

Spring joy, fair harmony, held while the moon without mounted above the olive trees. Then, little by little, again the voices grew iron and poison came into the taste.

"But if you loved me —!"

"But if you loved me —!"

"Dion's footfall beside your litter . . . Strephon's music in your ear! Every day, through Athens, goes your litter, and there is drawn a throng. On high days, at spectacles, you are pointed out to strangers. There is Myrina, that Glaucon the statesman thinks loves him —"

"I would not live indoors like a wife — sampling the sun only under favour!"

"I would that the law held you by the arm as it does the wife —"

"Father Zeus, Poseidon, Hades — these three have parted among them earth, sea, and sky! Beneath Olympus,

they have given to men their favourites, earth and sea and sky! Now, what will men give to women? Their love! — Oh, oh, their love!"

"Woman's love? What is that? It is craft — it is sold for ease! Love from the snake — love from the fox —"

"Maybe so, man the wolf!"

"Will you forbid Dion and these others your company? Will you stay closely in the house, go not abroad?"

"And live not till you come? And live only when you come?"

"Yes!"

"No!"

Myrina and Glaucon stood over against each other, each breathing hard. Then cried Glaucon, "You are false! I hear no music in this house to-night, smell no flowers!" He lifted his robed arm between them, burst from the room, called to his slave Milo. Myrina heard the doorkeeper opening the door at his imperious word. Glaucon was gone in black anger and jealousy.

The nurse Phrygia came into the room, and found Myrina seated, Asian fashion, upon the floor before the marble figure of Aphrodite.

"Phrygia," said Myrina, "men and women are beings without reason."

"Will you send for him back?"

"Will he come?"

"If you give him his way. . . . It is dangerous for you to quarrel with a man who is a statesman and giver of laws! In Athens the hetæræ live free and esteemed. Change may come; I would have you beware!"

"Glaucon — Glaucon — Glaucon — Glaucon! . . . I will not send."

"Ah, woman, yes, you will!" said Phrygia.

Light rose, light fell, rose, fell, rose — Glaucon returned not. Myrina went abroad to temple and spectacle. The great in Athens came about her; she used beauty and wit and a kind, even, of goodness — and all the time her heart ached and ached and said, "Glaucon — Glaucon — Glaucon!"

The third day she did not go out, but sat all day upon the floor before the statue of Aphrodite.

In the evening Phrygia brought her food. "You are growing hollow-eyed. If you lose your beauty, night comes down without a star!"

"Glaucon — Glaucon!"

Phyrgia sat down the silver dish. "Listen, mistress, — send for Glaucon — promise him all he wishes — forswear for him the light of the sun and the company, were it so, of the blessed gods! What! No state of affairs lives forever! His pride is fed — mayhap next month he will leave you free again! Demeter knows we all are children! Yet we must live and keep the red in our cheeks and the light in our eyes. . . . Man is master, but we can manage the master."

"All slaves alike."

"Give in, and gain the more —"

"Wolf and snake and fox."

"Or, if you do not love him, let him go."

"How can I do that? I know not the trick."

"Say one word only, and I will put myself in the way to find him. . . . Say naught, then! Stay only as you are."

"For the throne of Zeus can one pay too dear?"

Old Phrygia, rising, made to steal from the place.

Myrina caught at her dress. "Not yet — not ever, if I have courage!"

Light rose, light fell, came again a bright, a hot, and dusty day. Glaucon rose from no-sleep, and went forth upon Athenian business. The afternoon found him upon the Acropolis, near the precinct of Artemis. He was passing a grove of olive and myrtle — the light was sinking — when he heard his name breathed.

He gestured to those with him to go on, he himself turned under the trees. "Myrina . . ."

"So fearing and base a thing is woman when she is named Myrina! . . . Be my lover, Glaucon, and I will forswear light!"

"Did you come to me? — I would, at last, have come to you!"

"*I* came. . . . Will you go home with me?"

"I did not wholly mean unkindness. . . . I am not truly man the wolf."

"Will you come? Perhaps I am only woman the snake."

Glaucon went with her. They went together from the Acropolis into the narrow ways.

CHAPTER X

THE PEARL OF THE DEEP

MERANES, the turbaned satrap, had a palace that to the west sent its gardens to the sea-edge, and on the east opened sheer upon the ever-humming hive that was his satrapy's chief town. The palace owned a great, middle body with arm-like processes, jointed tentacles that strayed afar into odorous and flower-spangled wildernesses, and all was at once fantastically and strongly built. There were gilding and mosaic and fretwork that treated stone like flax. The palace spread, many-courted, myriad-roomed, multi-coloured. On the dusky garden side it was mingled with trees and bloom and fruit; it knew deep alleys and shadowy rings, and stone water tanks where lilies were planted and fish swam. But on the town side it rose blank and clear from the hot and clanging place. Here was the official palace — the palace of the audience, of the satrap's government, of officials, soldiers, magi, principal men and the horde that was not principal, spies, confidants, merchants of sorts, ministers and attendants of pleasure, of orders given and received, of complaint, pleading, demand, grievances and clamour, reward and punishment, strife open and concealed, jealousy, rivalry, lies, greed, fanatic hate and fanatic devotion, and always a brew of conspiracies, great and small, very many small, and on hand perpetually one or two great. Such a cloud hung always over it, hung garden side and city side, for influences were subtle and stole between. Breathing that musk and sandal,

hearing always that whispering, governed Meranes, satrap of a deep province, slave only to the namer of the satraps, the eastern king who was despot of a dozen despots.

Under Meranes, the governor of the chief city was Sadyattes. The magus of most power was Artaxias.

In the middle palace, whence he might move through any arm, Meranes had his rooms for dwelling. To the right, he went to the front upon the clanging town, and the business of the satrapy. When he entered again that middle part he drew with him confidants and favourites and made for himself now counsel, now revelry and relaxation. Or, alone here, he spent much consideration upon how to keep life, honour, and satrapy, seeing that to do so he must ever please that more richly turbaned despot who herded satraps, and about whose ears ever buzzed the maligners. Or he drew to him certain of the magi and talked with them, for he was a man who trembled at times on the edge of seeing the unseen and touching the untouched, and the magi were held to be free of the king's road to knowledge. To the left, past guarded doors, movement brought Meranes where the palace ran, many-fronded, into shadows of groves, into the realm of slippered footfall and treble voices. Here were squandered wealth, and heavy odours, and the nightingale's song. Here the life of Meranes stayed among women. Here lay the filled seraglio, and here for soldiers stood the files of eunuchs. And for all the soldiers and the slaves, for all the blank walls and guarded doors, word-bearing winds blew through the palace from the right to the left and the left to the right. Any part of the palace might conspire with any other part against any third part.

The favourite wife of the satrap was Aryenis, with just below her, creeping at times very nigh her, a woman of Egypt named Nitetis. Each had a son.

There were many women beside.

The beaded rooms and courts of the seraglio had likewise their order of importance, raying from the highly so to the less highly so, and thence to the hardly so at all. Golden cells in the comb, stood the quarters of Aryenis. Nitetis, the swarthy Egyptian, had the silver cells. These two only counted in seraglio politics, each drawing with her her faction. Next, in fair light, were clustered other women from the east and the west, the north and the south. Around these, in paler light and paler light, were gathered others. . . . Chamber on chamber, the palace was as a whispering shell. Ray on ray, range of rooms on range of rooms, it stretched and tapered through degrees of favour and nearness, into the cool murk of obscurity, faint clinging for support.

Aryenis had at her hand her son Alyattes, and Nitetis had at her hand her son Smerdis. The children numbered five and six years. Aryenis being first with Meranes, the palace, the city and the province called Alyattes the satrap's heir — called him so with emphasis since last year when Meranes, taking the lad with him into the presence of the king of the whole land who was making progress, prostrated himself with his son, and besought continuance of favour toward Alyattes after Meranes had returned to the fire whence he came. Surely Alyattes was heir! The magi, tutors of the children, taught the young Smerdis to give up to, to follow the lead of his brother. Also Aryenis taught Alyattes that he was first, as she taught Nitetis that she, Aryenis, was first. The Egyptian woman,

dark-skinned, black-browed, and rose-lipped, somewhat younger than the other, drew up her shoulders, slid by. . . .

Meranes, fatigued from hunting, came to the bath, was refreshed and clad in silk and gems. In the round room of the silver palms he sat before food, and when he had eaten, and drank somewhat sparingly of wine, he gave orders to admit to him the magus Artaxias. Waiting for him, he took in his hands a curiously shaped box filled with fine sand, in a cup beside it golden balls the size of pearls. The balls were for casting upon the smoothed sand, and the figures they made a sign-writing, vouchsafed by destiny. Meranes, seated on rich cushions, gathered the balls in his hand and cast them, then strove to read. The satrap was dark and bright of eye, well made, bearing power in his look. He cast the balls and brooded over the plain of sand. It expanded beneath his imagination into desert width.

Artaxias approached, stood in flowing robes. "Here is a strange figure," said Meranes. "I cannot read it!"

The magus stooped beside him. "O Meranes, that is the scorpion of Egypt. — Look for trouble from Egypt!"

"As you know, that is come," said Meranes. "They attack the southern borders. I go against them with ten thousand men."

"I know, O Satrap! Perhaps it is all the woe."

"Last night I watched the stars from the edge of the jungle. Sadyattes and I who had hunted together, watched them together."

"If the lion will make Sadyattes his brother, who, O Meranes, will say the lion nay?"

"Sadyattes is faithful."

"Says the sand so and the stars so?"

"Says my heart so."

"Says the fact so? The truth of the fact, O Meranes, is what I seek!"

"Should I not seek it too — a man encompassed by dangers? Do I not know that this one conspires and that one conspires? But Sadyattes is my old heart's friend whom I trust."

"The worst betrayers call themselves hearts' friends! Let us try the balls again." Taking the box he smoothed the sand, shook the balls in his hand and cast them. There appeared a tracing that might be made into the figure of a child. "The genii have sent a good sign!" said Artaxias. "I read it that they have in care the young Alyattes." He examined the field more closely. "He lies as in a peaceful sleep."

Meranes looked at the figure of the child. With his own hand he smoothed the sand, then put the box aside. "We watched the stars, and there was a passing of beings bearing lights from one quarter of the heaven to another." He drank wine. "I go against the host attacking the southern border. On the way thither there is a disloyal town shall be razed to the earth. In the prison here wait men who carried false tales to the king, and ere I go they die in sight of me and of the town. Artificers build me a new palace among the hills, and there comes to me from my brother Seleuces a gift of a hundred golden bowls, a hundred embroidered robes, and a hundred slaves chosen from ten thousand. . . . Yet, in the round room of my inward thought, these things are only winds and odours! . . . What is this world and what is Meranes?"

The room of the silver palms was dimmed for coolness and every casement opened to the night. Meranes, rising from the cushions, looked forth, either hand upon carved

stone. The star he thought of as peculiarly his own shone at this hour and season above a pillar set between trees. Meranes watched it, white, far, and bright. "How long has it burned, and how long will it burn? Whence came it at first and where will it go? What are its adventures, and what is their weight?"

The magus stood beside him. "Part of the star is dark and part of the star is light. The dark would grow — the light would grow — and they stand in each other's path. And yet is there but one star! Then comes on the train of happenings, and the sound in the ears of victory and defeat. . . . That is the star, and you are of the star, and partly dark and partly light." He wrote in the air with his finger. "May the light grow!"

When an hour had passed the magus went from the satrap's company. Meranes paced the room alone, then clapped his hands. Attendants came. The master would go now to the seraglio. At his command word had been sent, when he returned from hunting, to Aryenis.

In her country's dress, Aryenis sat by the fountain from which the palace took its name — the Palace of the Fountain. It was a great marvel, the fountain, and by ancient prescription held to belong to the chief wife, the favourite in the seraglio, the woman lifted by favour to the highest rank a woman might attain. It had been called Aryenis's since her bringing to the seraglio.

Meranes came and Aryenis made obeisance. The satrap raised her and held her in his arms. Far off there was music playing, the fountain bubbled, tinkled, sent its spray where fell upon it coloured light. The place that was a great and richly carven room, held eunuchs, slave-women, ministers and attendants of pleasure. "Go from hearing,"

said Meranes, and the lines fell back, leaving the fountain and a rich carpet spread beside it. The one man and woman sat embraced by the talking water.

"You are going against Egypt?"

"Yes."

"Nitetis will not like that!"

"This land is Nitetis's land."

"True, true! — Your land, Meranes."

"Is Alyattes sleeping?"

"Yes. . . . Would you look?"

Rising she led him through curtained archways to where, watched by slave-women, the child lay sleeping upon a golden bed. "Alyattes! . . ."

"He grows tall. . . . When I return he must leave the seraglio."

A spasm crossed Aryenis's face. "Is he so tall, lord? . . . Leave him a little longer!"

"He is ripe to be taken from women, placed among men. What! Do you not see him where he shall grow to be the king palm of the grove?"

"Yes, yes! I see him climbing steps of thrones. . . . Alyattes!"

"Come back to the fountain. . . . Were your heart parted, would the larger piece fall to Alyattes? I think it would — I think it would! . . . Meranes, the lesser man, to have the lesser gift."

"Lord, thou art the man. Alyattes is a young child."

"If a spirit appeared and said, 'Choose between his life and Meranes!'"

"Meranes, I do not have to choose."

"If — if —"

Aryenis bent her knees, touched the palms of her out-

spread hands, touched her forehead between, to the pavement. "Lord and master! How could I choose the child?"

Meranes stooped to her, strained her form to his, kissed her lips and throat and bosom. "Pearl of the Deep — Pearl closed in my hand! Long have we loved!"

"Long — long."

"Out of me were you drawn."

"Out of you."

"The sun and the earth — the ocean and the river —"

"The sun and the earth — the ocean and the river —"

"Aryenis — Aryenis!"

"Smite Egypt and return! — The Egyptian here! Will you visit her, Meranes, before you go — her son and her?"

She drew upon sorceress-power, and before he left the room of the fountain won from him his word that he would leave in the shadow that Egyptian. . . . It seemed that Nitetis had as well be returned to Egypt whence she had been bought!

But the next day a slave won way to Meranes, fell before him, then, being bidden to speak, gave a manner of sorceress-message from Nitetis. At first said the satrap, "I do not go," then, when the eunuch was backing from the room, recalled him. "I may come, I may not come. Say only that." . . . That same day, finding an hour with naught of moment set against it, he went to that part of the seraglio given to the Egyptian. He found Nitetis prone upon cushions, her body wrapped in stuff thin and dark as the air of night, her blue-black hair dishevelled. In the distance Smerdis played with a ball.

"My lord, my lord, you go to danger! I see javelins in the air, I see arrows, I see daggers, swords —"

"Do I not every day eat and drink with danger? Rule

here, fight there — everywhere alike leaps the wolf, creeps the serpent!"

"Who keeps the city? Who keeps us for my lord until he returns?"

"Sadyattes keeps the city."

"Oh, when you are gone Aryenis will rule us heavily, us here in the Fountain Palace! Oh, when you are gone your son Smerdis must say 'my lord' to Alyattes! Oh, Aryenis gloats upon power, envies power. Oh, she would snatch it, if she might, even from Meranes's hand!"

"Would you not, if you could, Egyptian, strangle Aryenis?"

"Would she not strangle me? Would she not, for her son, strangle my son and yours, Meranes? Would she not do more than that —? Oh, let me speak now, for when you are gone I shall not speak! I shall creep by the wall, I shall keep Smerdis with me in the shadow —"

"Who loves me will hurt nothing that is mine — not Smerdis, not Nitetis!"

Nitetis raised herself upon her palms, looked at him from between fine waves of blackness. "O lord, ruler and god of me! Let thy slave tell thee a fault of the lion! It is not to deign to suspect other wills and purposes moving in the plain and the jungle, for that, O my king, would hurt the pride of the lion!" With her hands she drew her hair about his feet. "But I, my lord, who am only a woman out of Egypt, can see the serpent and her rings and guile! And I who am naught can see because of utter love, utter love, utter love of Meranes!"

She put her lips against his feet. "Slay me if you will! And with my last breath I will say that only the Egyptian here, that only the Egyptian here, loved you, Meranes!"

"What is the serpent that you see?"

"Ah, I know not, though I seem to see a face!" Nitetis raised herself to her knees, lifted her head and laid it upon the satrap's arm. "And Sadyattes keeps the city — Sadyattes who came from Aryenis's country."

Smerdis, playing in the middle court with Alyattes said, "My father and my mother play together." After a while Alyattes, leaving the court and going to his mother where she lay in the room of the fountain, said, "Mother, the lady Nitetis and my father play together! Smerdis told me."

At sunset the gardens filled with the inmates of the seraglio. Through the day they had stayed for coolness in jalousied rooms, or upon the violet side of pillared courts. Now they came out under sky, though yet, all around them, ran the wall that could not be scaled, that could not be pierced. Mist rose from the water tanks, hung between the trees; heavy white flowers opened disk and cup, heavy sweet odours drifted and clung, moths appeared, and all the life of the dusk. Women moved or sat or lay under the spice trees, the fig trees, the palms, the tamarisks and cedars. Those who were young and beautiful were richly dressed. Those who were old or ill-shaped or ill-favoured were work-slaves only and as such marked by a mean and fantastic garb. Eunuchs moved through the gardens, and they, too, were made into grotesques.

Aryenis, attended, with her Alyattes that was to be the satrap's heir, entered a walk that was loved by Nitetis and given over to her by the etiquette of the place. Here was the Egyptian, Smerdis beside her. The two lay beside a stone basin where stood a rose-and-white flamingo, where upon a mound of earth a tortoise crawled.

Said Aryenis, "All mud of the Nile."

Nitetis lifted herself. "Meranes, that is master, has not yet departed. — Pearl of the Deep, who, between the first and now, has known every merchant's stall!"

Said Aryenis: "Ah, god to whom mounts the fire! Have I known many markets? Then did I learn in them more than your one land could teach!"

"Yet it gives me hold on Meranes!" Nitetis raised herself from the rock, the tortoise, the flamingo basin. She smiled. "Have you noted that Smerdis grows as tall as Alyattes?"

Aryenis drew her veil around her. Only her eyes showed.

"O her eyes glitter!" said Nitetis inwardly, and brought glitter into her own.

"Were I Alyattes, and grown, I should nightly thank the stars that I was not Smerdis!" said Aryenis. The Egyptian drew her shoulders together, made under her breath an incantation.

Meranes went with a force of horse and foot against the troubles of the southern boundaries. His lances gleamed, his pennants waved, his drums beat, the city saw him forth, the skies hung hot, blue crystal, the throng shouted, the sand whirled in the street. Sadyattes, governor of the city, armed his gates and his walls and esteemed that he had months, one, two, and three, in which to bring to fruition a long-mellowing piece of work. Three days after Meranes went forth, Sadyattes listened, in a secret place, to a foster-brother returned from an errand forth from the province, errand to the court of the king who made straps.

The foster-brother, greetings given, felt, with an expressive gesture, his head upon his shoulders. "So near death do you walk when you go to twist and to draw and to push

power out of the road of power! — Here is the matter in small space. Were Meranes proved ambitious, that is to say, proved traitorous, then the prover, were he Sadyattes, might have the satrapy. Does Sadyattes fail in proving, let him beware, having annoyed!"

Sadyattes stretched his arms, then stroked a black beard. "I shall not fail. You shall go again to the mighty king, for now I have this and that for you to take!"

The foster-brother went, and after weeks the foster-brother returned. "There is this. Sadyattes is satrap when Meranes and his son Alyattes are out of the way. But the great king is busy, being troubled with rebellions and conspiracies like unto locusts for number! He has need at this time for all his strength at home. If he summoned Meranes he might be suspicious and not come. If he said, 'Give over your satrapy!' the revolt that Meranes now only meditates in his mind might rise at once like a giant in the way. Meranes has with him so many thousand soldiers who, it is said, die easily for him. Moreover, he is putting down this trouble to the south, and it must be put down, and Meranes still used to do it, for he does it. But the southern trouble over, it were well that Meranes and his son with him were taken off at once and with subtlety. If it were managed with secrecy, without revolt or trouble, then the great king sees as in a dream that the satrapy would pass to Sadyattes who is a skilful holder of strong places and a gatherer and forwarder of wealth. But the king must be saved annoyance."

"I will spare the mighty king," said Sadyattes.

The sky stayed hot, blue crystal, the wind lifted the dust in the streets, the wind shook the leaves of the date

trees, the fig trees, the spice trees of the gardens. Swift horsemen rode in with tidings; there was travel of messengers between the force in the south and the jewel-city of the satrapy. Riders from the south said, "Meranes is a great victor. His soldiers shout his name!" Going from the town they said, "Meranes, all is well! Sadyattes holds faithfully the city, and faithfully your Palace of the Fountain, your wives and your son Alyattes."

Meranes fought every day, moved among his soldiers every day, received submissions every day. Meranes said to himself, "I am firmly fixed; I am like the star, around which the others go!"

A horseman brought a message to Sadyattes the governor: "Meranes to Sadyattes, greeting! I have set my heel upon rebellion. I and my army take, next week, the road to the city."

In the garden of the Palace of the Fountain certain eunuchs answered a certain word and at night received a climber over the wall at the angle nearest the sea. When he came down among them they gave him a dress like their own, and one took colouring matter and darkened his face and changed its lines. Then he went with them, by the moonlight walks down which floated laughter and singing and the tinkling of castanets.

There stood a pavilion by a pool where lilies grew. Two slave-girls met the eunuchs here, and there followed whispering. Then the servitors of the seraglio stood aside, but the man who had climbed the wall went on. At the entrance of the pavilion he encountered a third slave-woman together with a black, as huge as Africa. These two also answered the sign he made, and quitting the doorway went and sat by the edge of the pool. Sadyattes came into the

pavilion and the presence of Aryenis. She sat, veiled, in the moonlight.

"Did you bring that letter, Sadyattes, that through those in your pay, you said that you had to bring? I have here a lamp to read it by." As she spoke she uncovered the small flame burning in a golden boat.

Sadyattes bent before her. "Pearl of the Deep! climbing the wall I came here, at the peril of my life, to show it —"

"And of mine. Well, show —"

Sadyattes put out his hand and touched her veil. "Do you remember, before you came to the Fountain Palace, to Meranes's arms, do you remember, Aryenis, a diver whose hand might have gathered you where you lay at the bottom of the sea? But a wave turned him aside, as a wave brought you here!"

"I remember the diver, Sadyattes. But though I lay in the bottom of the sea, I was even there for none but Meranes! In water, in earth, in fire, in this time, in that time, in all times, I and Meranes have been, are, and will be for each other!"

"Nitetis —"

"Nitetis is mirage, false showing —"

"The false is best loved."

"How will you show me that, diver?"

"Though you speak strongly, yet will you act as the jealous act," thought Sadyattes, "and as the fearful and the proud!" Aloud he said, "You have sent messages of love by swift horsemen to Meranes. None have come back to you."

"I might know that the governor of the city would know that. Meranes saves his love words till he comes. I shall hear them falling, falling beside the fountain!"

"Nitetis sent also. He has sent love words back to Nitetis."

"Ah!"

"Then she sent again to him. And with her love words went words of poison."

"Against me?"

"Against you and against Alyattes."

Aryenis laughed. "The Nile uncleanness! — But Meranes listened not!"

"Oh, Egypt is subtle, Aryenis!"

"She is Ahriman's slave! — What lie did she make to Meranes?"

"Powers moving about this place have used her. There is a great plot."

"What lie?"

Sadyattes drew from his girdle a written-over paper. "This is for Nitetis, from Meranes. It was to have been taken by the hand of the magus Artaxias — my enemy, as well you know, Pearl of the Deep! I, having many ways, received the paper first. Read Aryenis. . . . Meranes's hand and seal."

Aryenis thought that it was so, for indeed the letter was finely forged. Sadyattes and that foster-brother and a ring of principal men, with many a subtle helper that was not seen to be principal, had wrought well toward making a fine, envenomed instrument for their purposes, and the letter was great aid thereto. "Read," said Sadyattes, and Aryenis read Nitetis's name and love terms around it, and lines that followed, and Meranes's name, and all in the hand, so she thought, of Meranes. She read in a voice that was a gathered sheaf of myriads of voices — old and old voices.

"*The pearl that is false, I will bray in a mortar. The rose that is true, I will set at the height of the garden. . . .*

"They call her the rose. — Meranes! Meranes!"

"Read — read!" said Sadyattes.

"*The rose that is true, I will set at the height of the garden. The bud that is mine and the rose's, I will cherish, but the false son will I blind and turn into the desert! . . .*

"The palace is falling, there are waves that are rising."

"Read — read!" said Sadyattes.

"*The one that I left in a high place shall curse the day of his birth!*"

"That is I, Sadyattes, the diver."

"Aaah!"

"Egypt told him this: 'Sadyattes the diver has touched the pearl that the satrap thinks gleams only for him!' Egypt gave him names of these and these in the Palace of the Fountain who would swear to that diver's coming near. . . . Many are against Aryenis and with Nitetis, meaning to climb by her. There are magi, there are captains who would see Sadyattes hurled from the tower, and Artaxias governor in his place. . . . Powers in the palace and the city are moving against you."

"Give me that paper to tear and to burn!"

"No — no! — Pearl of the Deep, Meranes returns presently to the city and the Palace of the Fountain. Says Nitetis, 'Lord, no word at the last had I from you!' Then says the satrap, 'This same Sadyattes, this diver, has had to do with that! There is a plot beneath my plotting. I will not wait even the day I meant to wait, but have him thrust into the dungeon below the dungeon —'"

"I will send this day a letter, indeed, to Meranes —"

"To let pass your messenger would slay me and you

and Alyattes. — Mark how deeply the fountain is poisoned!"

"The horns are blowing, the drums are beating Meranes's return. . . . When he comes, when he sees me, when I speak with him — "

"Are you so strong in faith? All this place whispers that for two years the Egyptian has gained! — Meranes leaves the sea for the river."

"I will choke her mouth with sand, I will make her salt with tears, I will bear her back and shred her afar in the desert!"

"How without sight and low-minded is Meranes, lying in Nitetis's arms, saying, 'Smerdis, my heir —'"

"Meranes!"

"Giving Alyattes, his son, to Sadyattes the diver."

"Alyattes! Alyattes!"

"He will put out the child's eyes — thrust him forth to beg — send, maybe, to him the executioner —" The governor of the city clasped in his hands her veil. "Pearl of the Deep! Look upon Sadyattes the diver — upon me and you and the boy Alyattes —"

"I see Meranes in a ring of fire."

"Protecting fire. And safe clasped with him there Nitetis and Smerdis! And you and me and Alyattes without upon the desert sand."

"Yes, just!"

"Were there a gate to enter —"

"I would creep through and sting."

"Nitetis alone —?"

"Smerdis, too."

"How would you fare, then, with Meranes? And Alyattes — how would he fare? Hatred, torment, and death!"

"To sting all to sleep — all to sleep — all . . ."

"The three. . . . And there is left Alyattes, the satrap's son, who may one day be satrap — Sadyattes aiding! . . . I see him riding, riding, the great satrap — shining with jewels, living long and splendidly, giving his mother honour who set him, true-born in the true-born's place!"

"Meranes! Meranes!"

"Hopeless now to make him see or hear or know — she has been gaining so long! . . . Who will sit here by the fountain when you are gone, strangled and cast into the sea, fed to the fishes there? One will sit here, bred by the Nile, younger than you — Where will be Alyattes? But Smerdis will be here, to be satrap after the satrap!"

"Water for the thirsty — revenge for the smitten and scorned —"

"Here, grovelling and death — there triumph, some sweetness, some gain!"

"He has earned it. . . . To creep across the ring of fire, no matter though it burns, and sting and sting and sting . . ."

Over the walls, down in the town, came a blowing of trumpets. Aryenis's lips parted, she raised her hands, she tore the veil from her face and bosom, she panted for air. So huge, so strong of life was the passion that she felt that it gained transforming power. She lifted herself, she stood with her body slightly swaying. Her eyes lengthened and narrowed, a strange smile came upon her lips. "Meranes will you hurt me? Then will I hurt you. Look, look where you set your foot!" — Her voice had a droning sound. With a circling motion, her body came to the ground, lay there wrapped in a wide veil of spangled gauze.

Sadyattes, crouching beside her, showed her another

false writing. "See, this is the plot of Nitetis and the magus Artaxias, the eunuchs Arses and Bagios, and of my kinsman Cyaxeres who would be governor when I am thrown from the tower! There are also the magi who are tutors of Smerdis."

"Nitetis, take Smerdis in your arms and drink both of you of what I give you! — And you drink, too, Meranes!"

Blue skies hung over the Palace of the Fountain, and sunlight searched out its ranges of rooms. Black skies, picked out with stars, hung over it; night filled its corridors. Sandal and musk breathed through it. Coloured lights flared in strangely shaped lamps, there went a whispering of leaves, of waters and of voices. Cabals, factions, conspiracies — when did the city, palace, seraglio lack in those? They never lacked, so why should they lack now? None thought that they lacked.

Did Nitetis truly conspire against Aryenis and the young Alyattes? Almost certainly she did. The air was heavy in the seraglio, with an ominous brooding, as of a long-gathering, great storm. The women from north, south, east, and west took sides; the eunuchs, the slaves took sides; the children, the merchants, the musicians that were admitted. The palace murmured, looked aslant, signed with the fingers.

Meranes, having conquered on the southern boundaries, approached the city of his satrapy.

All day was triumph, was blare of music, shouting and festival: all day and night.

The second dawn Meranes came in sight of the city and, running toward the sea, his gleaming palace, in sight, too, of the column of welcome and triumph winding forth to meet him. Meranes's eyes shone, wine-colour

glowed in his cheek. He stroked the beautiful steed that he rode. "Well is the world, and I am prime in it!" thought Meranes.

The day went in pomp. Evening drew on, and Meranes, in the round room of the silver palms, a throng about him, listened to Artaxias, pressing close, hastily whispering. "Meranes, drive these people back. Send for Cyaxeres and the Faithful Guard. There is a plot. I tell you the bow is bent and the arrow ready to sing!"

Meranes frowned. He looked at Sadyattes, coming toward him, richly dressed and smiling. "I think that the magus Artaxias plots against peace of mind and well enough! — I have never seen those I rule more truly welcoming. — Be still, for I hear the nightingale singing in the garden!"

"You are going to the seraglio?"

"Now."

"Go not, Meranes!"

But Meranes thrust him from him and beckoned Sadyattes.

"Lord," said Sadyattes, "even this room fills with rich perfume and song! The Pearl of the Deep awaits you, and the Flower of Egypt and many a lesser gem and blossom."

"See that the palace is well guarded," said Meranes. "A raven has been croaking — croaking —"

"It is guarded well," answered Sadyattes, "though hardly does it need guarding! All is at peace, Meranes, owning you lord."

Meranes passed through the cedar doors, very thick, well-made, strongly watched on either side. Eunuchs welcomed him, knees and forehead to the ground, then bands of fair women. . . . All the place was decorated, fragrant,

musical, coloured, warm, voluptuous. All was for the satrap, all was for the warrior home, for the rich man, the powerful. . . . Meranes made to turn in that swimming, coloured mist towards the Room of the Fountain . . . then suddenly there seemed a straight road in the world to the flower that sprang in Egypt. He saw Nitetis, standing between pillars, robed in red gauze, with blue-black hair, with eyes that allured and lips that smiled, "Come!" She stood at a distance; when he moved toward her, she moved from him. He followed — here was a great room that was hers, set with moon-like white flowers, the light coming through glass like jewels. She turned, all her form was seen through her red dress, she lifted her arms, touched her hands together above her eyes, sank down and kissed the earth before Meranes. . . . And all the many moving figures, the eunuchs, the slaves, the human gems and blossoms, seemed to vanish, fade, and sink away. Here was only a garlanded room and Egypt. Meranes made the sign to leave them alone.

There was an eunuch, Bagios, chief of eunuchs, who held for Meranes the secret hatred of a slave for a master, a worm for a trampling foot. Bagios looked to Sadyattes for freedom and wealth and the sweetness of revenge. Bagios might time much, arrange much in the seraglio, direct those bands of welcomers, appearances, disappearances, give clear stage for happenings. . . . He might now go to the Room of the Fountain and speak of the Room of the White Flowers.

Meranes and Nitetis lay embraced. "Lord, lord," said Nitetis, "you might have thought, while you were away, that Aryenis was satrap! See you not how she has stolen my beauty?"

Looking at her he thought her the most beautiful thing in the world. "Lord, lord," she said, "and know you what she said of your son Smerdis, in whom men say they see you when you were boy? 'The ugly wretch!' she said. 'When Meranes sleeps for good and Alyattes is satrap, he shall be blinded!'" — Nitetis was starry-eyed, Nitetis was sugar-lipped, Nitetis bloomed like the rose. — "Lord, lord," said Nitetis, "she thinks always of Alyattes as satrap! At heart she is mother-woman, only a little, a little is she wife-woman!"

Meranes pressed his lips against the lips of Nitetis. The Egyptian sank her head upon his breast, curved her arm around his neck. "Lord, lord, would you have Smerdis humbled and blinded — Smerdis that is your image as Alyattes is not? . . . Lord, lord, here is the child, dark and lovely as angels are —"

Smerdis, all richly dressed, came from among the flowers. He carried a platter heaped with fruit — grape and pear and plum and nectarine. He kneeled and placed these beside Meranes. "They are for you, my father, shining like god!"

The plants, the flowers, led off in this direction and in that, leaf walls hung with white bloom, and, between, narrow paths with space for subtile movement. . . . The flames behind the jewelled lantern glass seemed suddenly to tremble and leap. The Room of the Fountain came into the Room of the White Flowers.

Meranes, yet in the arms of Nitetis, bent and caressed the boy with the fruit. "By the fire! We are alike —"

Nitetis's body stiffened. She spoke in a rattling voice. "Look — look!"

Aryenis stood over them, her body, her lifted arm

curved. They saw her, grey and purple, spangled, with eyes that glittered, in her hand a poniard, wavy-lined and poisoned, wrought to a keen and piercing touch. It rose and fell — rose and fell — against the three entangled on the golden couch. It stung Egypt first. She sank aside, slipped like water from the couch to the floor. "Look — the serpent!" she said, and lay with her eyes upon her own blood. The boy Smerdis clung to Meranes, preventing him from rising from the golden bed. The quick dagger touched him next, and so deeply that life passed out almost at once. He lay among the tumbled fruit, rival no longer to Alyattes. — Meranes, rising, seized Aryenis, but she twisted from him, and struck the dagger into his breast. "May your heart know my woe!" She drew out the blade, let it fall upon the floor. "Meranes — Meranes!"

Meranes fell across the golden bed. . . . The Room of the White Flowers filled with those lesser blossoms and gems of the place, and with slaves and eunuchs. They made loud outcry, Bagios leading. Musk and sandal and smell of blood, and over the floor the scattered fruit, grape and pear and plum and nectarine, and in the centre the three fallen and Aryenis. Then Alyattes came running into the Room of the White Flowers and to his mother. Aryenis sat upon the bed and put her arms about him. "Child — child — child!" She hid her eyes against him. Nitetis stirred, raised herself upon her hand and looked around. The dagger lay in the light. The Egyptian put out her hand and took it, then, drawing herself up to that mother and son, struck Alyattes with it between the shoulders. Aryenis lifting her eyes, straining him to her, saw the Egyptian fall and die. "Alyattes! Alyattes!"

Above the wild outcry of the place was heard the entry at the cedar doors of Sadyattes and armed men. The gems and the blossoms wildly scattered, the bands of eunuchs, conspirators or dully innocent, stood there, stood there, Bagios well in front, dressed in red and yellow, with mad action of his arms, with explanatory torrents of words. Slaves, wailing with reason, for they all might be scourged to death, brought fresh lamps so that there might be more light upon evil. Through the windows poured in the night air, and droves of moths came to the lamps. When Sadyattes entered the Room of the White Flowers Aryenis was sitting upon the couch, her limbs beneath her, and in her lap the dead Alyattes.

"I crept through and stung," she said to Sadyattes the diver, "but the fire has charred me black."

CHAPTER XI

THE BANKS OF JUMUNA

ZIRA, clad in a ragged, brown dress, sat beneath a clump of bamboo growing by the stream that ran past Gângya's house, and cleaned the copper cooking-pots. For three years Zira had been called widow. When you are young and fortunate, beloved and happy, three years is not a great space of time. When you are young but unfortunate, abused and wretched, it may be long indeed. Zira was young in years, but quite old in misery.

Her head showed shaven, the ragged shawl that covered it being pushed back since none was by saving the monkeys in the banyan tree and the lizards on the rock wall. She was thin, for she was never given enough to eat and steadily overworked. Upon her arms were black bruises, for her mother-in-law was subject to hot rages and yesterday had shaken Zira until her teeth chattered in her head, and the blood stood still under the griping fingers. Across her shoulders ran a weal from the stick with which she had been struck because she had broken an earthern lamp. Zira looked, and was, forlorn, ill-treated, poorly lodged and fed, abused, struck with tongue and hand, a menial and pariah, a widow in the house of her husband's parents.

Zira scoured, dully, a huge red copper pan. There were many vessels to be cleaned, for Gângya was a rich man as riches went in the village by the Jumuna. The earth swam in heat; it was so hot that even the monkeys were quiet, and the lizards themselves might seem less active. Zira,

drawing a sigh, put her head on her arms and her arms on her knees. She must have a little rest, no matter what the consequences! A change to looking on pleasurable things from things so sadly unpleasurable becomes now and then a necessity, even to the old in woe. Zira must have a little colour and fragrance and music, and went to the only place where she knew she might get them, and that was down the steps into Memory. The ache might seem worse after being there, but let it seem!

Madhava's caste and her caste had been *Vaisya*, merchants, husbandmen. As a child and a girl she was not without teaching. Her own mother strictly taught her many things, though not, of course, the high things in which the priest instructed her father and elder brother. But she knew, sitting by the stream, with her head in her arms, that she had been born many times and would be born many times again. But she was not one of those strong ones who could stray at will in Memory. She could go down the steps a little way, but then there arose, as it were, mist and a roaring in the ears. She had imagination, had it, indeed, in bulk, but it did not occur to her particularly to connect imagination and her own history — not yet did that occur. She made pictures with which to lighten unhappiness, but often the pictures were bitter, and gave her no entertainment. . . . But now, down in Memory, she was re-living small happinesses of childhood and girlhood — toys and adornments and days and moods and happenings — and then again, again, for the ten thousandth time again, her marriage to Madhava.

Her marriage to Madhava. Ah! . . . Ah! She sat under the bamboo, under the teak tree, and forgot the pots and pans, the bruises upon her arms and how sore were her

shoulders — how dull and slow-beating and sore was her heart! . . . Village lights — village lights, and the gongs in the temple — lights carried in procession, and flowers and flowers; spices and cakes and fruits burned in sacrificial fires. . . . How she, Zira, was dressed by her mother and sisters and the neighbours, and how she met Madhava and they walked hand in hand. . . . All the rites — oblation to Agni and prayers for long life, kind kindred, many children, right wealth — all the rites, and the marriage pledge,

"That heart of thine shall be mine, and this heart of mine shall be thine."

How bright was that day — and the village shouting and laughing — and all so friendly, even the children friendly — children that now stoned her and cried "Widow, widow! Madhava must have died because of you!"

Oh, the marriage, how sweet it was, and the feasting and the well-wishing — and now all the sweetness long gone by, long, long gone by. . . . That was the trouble with going down into Memory — the swords were so sharp beside the flowers!

Zira raised her head and looked at two darting lizards beside her, then at a painted butterfly upon a red flower, then up into the boughs of the tree. A monkey there threw down a sizable twig. It struck upon the wall and sent the lizards into crannies. "Tree-folk, you do not suffer like me!" said Zira.

"Boom! — Boom!" went the temple gong, some sacrifice being toward. Zira threw herself upon the ground and wept.

Blurred and aching pictures still came through. The days after the wedding danced by — then Madhava, ill, pale, and shaking, then red with fever, bright-eyed, talking,

talking, talking! — Madhava lying upon the great bed and Zira and his mother and sisters nursing him — the priest coming, gazing, speaking — and the hot still days with the rains beginning — and the nights velvet black with the clouds gathering — and all the verses of the sacred writings that they said . . . but Madhava only burned the more with fever and cried the more wildly — and the mother and sisters said to Zira, "Unhappy one! Do not all people know that if the husband dies it is the wife who slays him!"

Zira dug her fingers into the earth. Memory now was not fair and warm and dear, no indeed it was not! but it held her — it held her — away down the stair! It poured over her again, it made her feel the hot days with the rains beginning, the nights velvet black without a star. It made her hear again the dogs that howled by night, the sounds that went stealthily through the village, the jungle murmur that the winds brought over the fields, over the village wall. She heard again, mind-brought, the cry of a tiger a-roam. Memory made her hear and see and touch Madhava, talking, talking, talking, and hard to hold in bed, and the nursing women so tired and thirsty for sleep. . . . It brought her to a grey day with warm, large raindrops falling slowly — it brought her to a black, black night, and Madhava lying at last quiet, seeming to sleep. . . . Madhava lay so still, seeming as though he dreamed and were happy. Itura, his mother, and Jadéh, his sister, stole away to get a littlé sleep. Zira stayed, heavy-eyed, beside the bed. What happened then? She sat upon the floor, her head drooped against the foot of the bed; she did not mean to shut her eyes, or, if she shut them, meant at once to open. . . . Zira drew a moaning sigh, lying

upon the earth beneath the bamboo by the stream near Gângya's house, three years and more from that night. What happened? Some demon entered surely to entice! but if she had not slept the demon might not have won in. So it was Zira's fault — Zira's fault — Zira's fault — set to guard her lord, her husband, and sleeping, sleeping — Zira's fault — Zira's fault. The fever came back to Madhava. He opened his eyes, he sat up in bed, he looked around — and there was only the faithless wife sleeping. Madhava put his feet out of the bed; he stood up — and all the little bells and flower faces were calling! Madhava went out of the room and down the passage and out of the house door — all in the soft and black and muffled night. Zira, in the shadow of the teak tree, took up a handful of earth and strewed it over her sunken head. O woe, woe! death for Madhava, and for Zira such long woe, such long atonement, such long woe. . . . Down in Memory, she followed Madhava. Out of the house, into the village street, and the night so black and wordless with the rain at hand and all householders within doors, sleeping with their families. The street, the wall, the gate made for keeping out all jungle beasts, but not formed so that a man might not pass from within, knowing the opening's trick — Madhava went out of the gate, and Zira who had not waked and followed that night, waked and followed now. . . . The beaten path across the black fields, and the hilly ground, and the little ravines, and in front the jungle growing higher, growing blacker, growing higher, growing blacker, growing nearer. . . . The jungle sounds growing louder. . . . Madhava the sick man, fevered and talking to himself, and walking the jungle path where no one went at night, before him the

pool with the cane and the fallen trees, and the bank where the jungle came to drink. . . . Madhava, talking to himself, going to the jungle, and there, by the pool, red-eyed, and waiting, the tiger whose voice for a week the village had heard. . . . Zira stumbled up the stair from Memory, covering her eyes with her hands.

"My lord is gone, my head is shorn!" —

breathed Zira under the bamboo.

"Mine is death in life,
The evil one!"

She took the greatest copper pot, set it between her knees, and with the rag that she held rubbed it clean. It blazed in the sun, it hurt her eyes. A quarrel sprang up between the monkeys in the teak tree. They chattered and screeched at one another, they showered twigs and leaves. Zira, drawing her hand around and around the copper vessel, saw with each circle some one of the hours that followed Itura's return to the room, and the missing of Madhava. Around — the tracking him from the house — around — the rousing of the village, the finding without the wall his naked footprints — around — the following at dawn upon the jungle path — around — the coming to the pool, the track of the tiger there, the end of all signs and of all hoping — around, around — the beginning of the unhappy life of Zira, a woman wedded, whose husband was dead!

The monkeys in the tree sulked after quarrelling. The lizards ran again over the wall, the water went past in sheets of diamonds, the brown earth swam in heat, boom! boom! sounded the temple gong. Zira gathered together

all the pots and pans, clean now until they must be cleaned again. She weighted herself with them, her thin shoulders bending under the load. She drew the ragged veil over her head, and getting stumblingly to her feet because of her burden, faced Gângya's house that was all her home. "What stupid and wicked lives were mine before I came here — before I came here?" asked Zira, and went on to the house and her midday piece of sessamum-cake.

Three years. . . . And all that time Madhava walked the earth as Madhava, though not by the banks of Jumuna. He walked in a forest back from Ganges, a forest standing from old time, a resort from old time of holy men. Madhava gathered firewood, dry branches from beneath the trees, dead and broken scrub. He carried the fuel to the hut of such a man. When that was done, he shouldered an earthern jar and went for water to a spring two bow-shots away. When the water was brought, he made cakes of millet flour and baked them upon a heated stone. When they were baked he ranged them upon a board, and when this was done he went out under the trees, looking for Narayana, the holy man. He found him seated, entranced, under a sandal-wood tree. Madhava, stepping backward, returned to the hut and seating himself by the fire which burned without doors, waited for the seer to retake the body and bring it to the hut for food. Madhava was the holy man's one pupil, his *chela*.

Madhava looked through the grey and green and purple arches of the forest. He looked at one spot, and he said over thrice verses that he had been taught, and strove to still the waves of the mind that ran here and there in twenty different channels. Madhava always found it very hard to still the mind, though the holy man told him the method

time and again. . . . This day, somehow, the waves sank of their own accord.

Madhava, sitting there in the forest back of Ganges, beside the jar of water and the millet cakes, with the blue wood smoke rising in a feather, very quietly and suddenly remembered how he had happened to enter the forest. He had not remembered it before. . . . He had come to the forest from long travelling to and fro in a land of towns and temples and villages and roads with people always upon them. There he was the servant of a horse-trader, and people thought him out of his head, and the children gathered around him in the villages, and he told them stories of the animals in the forest, and especially of one great tiger. The horse-trader treated him very cruelly. He suffered. In the night-time he wept for wretchedness. Then one day, going upon the road that touched this forest, his master the horse-trader began to beat him mercilessly. Madhava felt something terrible rise within him. He took an iron bar and killed the horse-trader, and then he ran into the forest — ran and ran and ran, until he caught his foot in the root of a tree and fell, striking his head. . . . Madhava, sitting by the sage's hut and fire, drew a long breath. It was clear how he came into the forest.

The holy man lying under the sandal-wood tree came back to his body and brought it to the hut and the evening meal. The blue feather of smoke went up, the shadows stretched at immense length, the insect folk made their even song. The seer sat down and took from Madhava's hands a cup of water and a millet cake.

"Master," said Madhava, "I have remembered how I came into the forest."

"It was written that that would come to pass."

"I was with my master, a horse-trader, who treated me cruelly. One day he beat and cursed me. Something terrible rose within me and I took an iron bar and killed him. Then I ran into the forest and ran and ran until I caught my foot in a root and fell upon my head —"

"That was a year ago," said Narayana. "I found you lying without sense. I carried you here and nursed you well. But you could not remember until now how you came into the forest."

"That was how I came," said Madhava.

"It is well that that veil has been taken away. Now will you learn with greater strength."

"Can a man learn truth who is servant to horse-traders, and a murderer?"

"The soul does not know poverty, does not murder, is not man nor woman, Brahmin nor Sudra."

Madhava stayed in the forest, brought firewood and water, and was taught by Narayana. Another year went by. There came a day when Madhava sat beneath a tree, pondering the universe. Suddenly he remembered how he came into the great river plain, and to be the servant of the horse-trader. . . . Again he drew himself from a pool of water, at the edge of the jungle. It was black night, with large, warm raindrops falling; there was a great beast coming out of the brush — a tiger surely. Madhava had gone to meet it — surely he was drunken or in a fever! The beast knew that there was something strange — turning aside, he had gone padding away. Madhava went on, walking very surely through the jungle. He went fast, with great strides, went through the night and into the day. Madhava, seated beneath the tree, remembered that going, remembered lying down and sleeping, rising and going

on again — and then days and nights of sleeping and wandering, eating fruits and nuts, struggling with, outwitting, or companioning jungle inhabitants, being as a wild man. He remembered, after many days of this, striking out of the jungle into a cultivated country. He remembered a road and travellers along it. . . . Men came by with horses — a man stood and talked to him. . . . That was the horse-trader.

Madhava told Narayana that evening. "I have remembered how I came into this country, and to be the servant of the horse-trader."

"One day," said Narayana, "you will remember all that is beyond north and south and east and west."

"I seem to have been a man ill or mad or drunken."

"That was one of thy little selves. The soul is not ill nor mad nor drunken."

Madhava stayed in the forest, brought firewood and water, and was taught by Narayana. Another year went by.

Five years. . . . The village upon the Jumuna had bound into the great sheaf of village tales the story of the bridegroom who fell ill and strayed from his house in the black night, and by the pool at the edge of the jungle was taken by the great old tiger. It was put upon the legend shelf, for telling by old to young, for no one knew how long. It was become simply a story among stories. Wet season, dry season, seed time and harvest, the village went about its usual business. . . . Zira looked and felt an old woman. When she was regarded at all it was as a drudge who was justly paying. Women were not widowed unless they had sinned. . . . Gângya and Itura, their sons and daughters, ill-treated her because it was Retribution, and as the

Eternal Order of Things would have it. But now, long since, grief for Madhava had lost edge. No longer, as at first, did they load Zira with accusations, gross terms of blame. No longer did they make daily reference to her evil nature. They only put upon her heavy drudgery, abstinence from much food or sleep and from all pleasure. Bowed and silent, Zira worked her fingers to the bone.

Five years. . . . Zira washed clothes in the stream near the teak tree. Upon the opposite bank a child was playing with sticks and stones. It was a little child and sweet. It laughed to itself, building a hut to shelter a stone. Zira sat back upon her heels and watched the child. Something yearned within her, yearned and yearned, then mounted.

The child looked across to the woman for applause. "Pretty! Pretty!" called Zira. She had with her a cluster of fruit. She tossed this across to the child who caught it and laughed and danced about. "Something else! something else!" cried the child. Zira had a piece of bread that with the fruit was to have made her dinner. She threw this across also. The child caught it and ran away, looking back and laughing.

Zira, washing clothes with eyes that dazzled for weariness, with an aching and hungry body, felt within her being, away from the ache and glare, away from Gângya's house, away from Zira washing clothes, the rise of something from level to level, power and faculty changing form. . . .

In the forest, Madhava brought to Narayana's hut firewood and water. He built the dawn fire, laying the sticks and the tinder, striking the flint and steel. All over the world was a mist, with a moist smell of earth and leaves. The mist began to part, showing ragged depths. Madhava

stood up from the flame he had kindled. It crackled and sang, it made his garment shine, and his outstretched arm. Madhava remembered that he was Madhava, the son of Gângya, the husband of Zira. He remembered his childhood, his youth and manhood, in the village by the Jumuna. All that came back to him as though it were yesterday. Before him formed the face of Zira. . . .

Narayana sat in contemplation under the sandal-wood. When the spirit returned, said Madhava to him, "Master, I fully remember this life. I am Madhava, son of Gângya, who lives in a village by the Jumuna. I was the bridegroom of Zira, but hardly were we married before I fell ill. In fever, I must have wandered from home. It all comes back to me. . . . Many to whom I am debtor think that I am dead. I must return to them."

"Ropes unbroken," said Narayana, "will bind and draw as is their nature to. You may not miss out your years as a householder. Go then, son, but put in a safe treasure room what you have learned."

"I do not go," said Madhava, "until comes one to take my place."

In three months' time there came a youth to take Madhava's place. On the other side of the forest had lived a holy man who now laid down the body. The student who served him came, as the sage had directed, to attach himself to Narayana. "Now go!" said Narayana to Madhava. "As long as the ropes are there, answer to their drawing. But remember that there is a fire that you must feed with yourself."

"I mean to remember," said Madhava.

Madhava cut himself a staff and took a bottle for water, and said farewell to Narayana and to the *chela* from the

other side of the forest, and became a traveller. As he went through the land he worked for food, and now he slept under some friendly roof, and now he slept by the road-side.

He had been given three years of clean living and of wisdom words, and that is enough to set the stalk to dreaming of flowers and fruit. . . .

Nearly six years! Zira, drawing water from the stream, set down the jar, straightened her aching back, and shaded her eyes with her hand. There was a man standing under the teak tree. He seemed travel-worn, but a well-looking man for all that.

Zira made to lift the jar to her shoulder and go away. The man spoke. "Are the people friendly in this village?"

"That is as it is looked at," said Zira. "To many they are friendly."

The man came nearer. "Whose house is that among the trees?"

"Gângya's."

"Are Gângya and Itura living, and their sons and daughters?"

"You have been in the village before? — Gângya and Itura are living, and their daughters and all their sons save one."

"Which one is that?"

"Madhava."

"I remember him. — How did he die and when?"

"He had a fever. In the night time he rose from his bed and left the house and the village. He walked upon the jungle path — into the jungle — to the jungle pool. It was night, and there was a tiger hunting. . . . Madhava died nearly six years ago."

"Madhava! — I heard that he was to be married."

"He was married."

"They said the woman was beautiful. Her name was Zira."

"Yes. Zira."

"Is she living?"

"Yes, she is living."

"She was very beautiful. . . . All these years she has been named a widow."

"All these years she has been widow," said Zira. "She may live yet many years."

"A widow has a miserable life," said the man. "Is she yet beautiful?"

"No."

"Ah," said the man. Zira gazed at him, then again she turned to lift the water jar, then let it be. She went nearer to the man. She gazed again. "Who are you?"

"Whom am I like?"

"You are like Madhava."

Zira's voice came only from her lips. She loosed the fastening of her shawl that covered her head and shadowed her face. It fell. She stood against the rock wall. "I am Zira. Are you Madhava?"

Madhava buried his face in his arms. "The tiger should not have fled from me that night, nor I have wandered on —"

"You are Madhava . . . Madhava!"

Her voice deepened, then rose in a loud and bitter cry, "Madhava!"

Madhava dropped his hands from his face. He rose and came to her. They stood by the running water. "Thou art not fair as thou wert. . . . Or art thou fairer? . . . We

have suffered — we have learned. . . . When all is said, thou art deep in me!"

"When all is said, thou art deep in me!"

"It was broken — the beautiful tree! But now it grows again."

"It grows again!"

From Gângya's house came a calling. "Zira — Zira!" Zira turned, and Madhava with her. Hand in hand they went to Gângya's house.

CHAPTER XII

VALERIAN AND VALERIA

THE emperor, acting in his capacity as Pontifex Maximus, had confirmed as virgin priestess of Vesta, Flavia, a child of ten, daughter of Valerian and Valeria. To celebrate the event Valerian gave the people games. Held in the new Amphitheatre, the spectacle drew all Rome. The emperor honoured the donor by his presence. Gladiators contended, after strange fashions, with beasts of the wood and the plain and with one another. Valerian, a successful general, lately returned from the west, had brought prisoners, great flaxen-headed men, who now fought, divided into two bands, kin against kin, with freedom the prize for the surviving.

The Amphitheatre was huge, one oval, hollow wave of men and women. The people came early, struggling for good seats, desirous of being on hand for every important entrance, — the emperor, the senators, the prefect of the city, the vestals, the donors of the games, the famed, the rich, the knowing. Down streamed the sun, hot and bare upon the arena, broken elsewhere by awnings of rose and blue. Flowers withered in garlands, perfumes were burning in silver braziers. A sea of sound steadfastly beat against the ear, a vast blend of voices, male and female, of every quality. *Vigiles* kept order. In the arena, in the sloping passways between the divisions of the benches, jugglers and buffoons and pantomimists kept the many amused until there should arrive the glittering few. Fruit and a kind of

comfit were carried about and distributed. The people acclaimed Valerian the Generous.

The freedwoman Lais picked a great bunch of grapes for herself, and another for her daughter Iras, a child a year or so older than the little new vestal. "Valeria has a marble chair while I have a stone bench," quoth Lais. "But she can eat no better grapes than these! Moreover, she has kissed her girl for the last time to-day, while I can kiss mine any day! Still the gods keep planting thistles with roses!"

"Mother, mother!" whispered Iras. "Is it over there that father will sit?"

"Hush, and eat your grapes!" answered Lais.

The oceanic voice of the place deepened to a roar. The great were coming. The buffoons, jugglers, pantomimists, passers to and fro stood still. Up and down the dizzy slopes the mass scrambled to its feet. "Hail, Cæsar! Hail, Cæsar!"

With pomp came the emperor, prætorians, and civic officers; with pomp came the six vestals, the *virgo vestalis maxima* and her five sister priestesses, splendidly attended. The six were robed in white, stola and pallium, their hair bound with ribands of white wool. They took the seats of the vestals, over against the emperor. With them, to-day, came the newly chosen young vestal, the child of ten, daughter of Valerian and Valeria. She was dressed like the older priestesses, but her hair had been cut upon her taking the vows. She had an especial place; she sat stiffly, in view of all, a little figure all in white, with folded hands. Her vows were for thirty years. For ten of these she would be trained in the service of Vesta, for ten she would watch the sacred fire, bring the sacred water, offer the sacrifices

of salt cakes, the libations of wine and oil, pray for the Roman State, guard the Palladium; for ten she would teach the youthful vestals. She would have enormous honour, great privileges.

The freedwoman and her daughter, leaning forward in their places, whispering each to the other, watched the child in white. "See the people look at her! Are the games for Flavia?" asked the child Iras, and she spoke with a child's jealousy.

"Eat thy grapes, my poor babe! Thou wilt not have a great house and riches and honour like the vestals!" Lais gave her rich, chuckling laugh. "Neither, if thou lettest the fire go out at home, shalt thou be cruelly scourged! Nor, when thou art older, if thou slippest once — just once — just one little time — shalt thou be buried alive!"

The little, new vestal sat still, with her hands crossed before her. Her eyes filled with tears, they rolled down her cheeks. The attendants having her in charge whispered to her hastily. She must not weep! "Then turn me so that I cannot see my mother."

Valerian with Valeria his wife had bowed before the emperor. Now they sat quietly, with a studied lack of state, as was fitting, about them friends of the soberer sort. Valerian talked with the Stoic Paulinus. Valeria sat still as a figure of ivory and gold, her long-fingered hands clasped in her lap, her eyes upon the garlanded place of the vestals, upon the little figure sitting so stiffly. . . . Down in the arena they were making ready, and in the meantime five hundred dancing fauns and nymphs gave entertainment.

Not till there began the struggle between man and beast and man and man would tense interest stop the voice of the

host. Up and down the sound was as of the sea, or of a high wind in those endless barbarian forests on the edge of empire where Valerian had been. Behind the freedwoman and her child crowded market men and women, provincials of low estate, half a dozen soldiers. Of these last it appeared that Valerian had been general. Their general figured in their talk, and they did not scant their praise. They called him brave and wary, good father to his cohorts. A provincial asked about the children of his body. Lais turned a little toward the speakers. — "All but this one died. He adopted a son so that his name should last — see, the young man standing up! But he has no own children save the little vestal."

Lais, with a jerk of her head, went back to eating grapes and contemplating the fauns and nymphs.

"No lawful children, you mean?" said the provincial.

"Of course," answered the soldier: "owned children. There are owned children and there are unowned children. — Ha! Watch them leap and dance!"

Lais ate the purple grapes, spitting out the seeds. Iras, leaning forward, watched the wreathing fauns and nymphs. "Mother, mother! When I am grown I will be a dancer!"

"Who is the old man talking to the general?"

"Paulinus the Stoic. — Once Valerian thought no more of his soul than another —"

"Ha! We begin!"

The five hundred dancing nymphs and fauns swirled from the arena like wind-blown coloured leaves and petals. A grating slid back, there came forth a hollow roar. Forth upon the sand walked a lion from Africa, a king among lions. Another gate opened; there stepped forth, naked, a

yellow-headed giant. The games began. . . . Presently there were many beasts and many men.

Valeria sat with her hands in her lap, and for a long time had no thought save for the child that was going from her. Her will had bowed to that going. It was a great and honourable destiny, and many competed for the nomination for their daughters. Flavia did not pass from life. She, Valeria, would hear of her, see her, might visit her in the great, rich House of the Vestals. But the mother grieved that she would not see her every day, would no more lie beside her nor bear her in her arms. She was so sunken in the thought of the little one that she gave scant attention to the place in which she was, to the sloping wilderness where men and women took the place of trees, and down below, as in a vast pit, men fought with and like the beasts of the wood. Upon the slopes held breathlessness, a leaning forward and down as though bent by a wind. Down in the arena held heavy breathing, straining, bestial sounds of struggle, shouts, groans, cries of triumph and despair. . . . Flavia stepped aside in her mind. Out of mind went the other vestals, the emperor, all the great, and the massed people; aside stepped also Valerian. She had been to the games before, but she had not before felt woe and sadness like this. Her soul plunged into black depths, then rose. For the first time she hated the games; she found them smeared with guilt. It seemed to her that veils parted; she caught wider glimpses of life and its ways. How long she had lived, and how bent and crooked, here starved and here swollen, was living! These hateful games — Cæsar's empurpled face — the multitude craving and lusting for the red, the loud, the suffering of another. . . . She felt for all a sick distaste. She wished to rise and go away, Flavia

in her arms and beside her Valerian. . . . She went farther. Faint as first dawn in an old deep forest she experienced a sense of oneness with all within the range of perception, with the breathless tiers, with the panting, the groaning arena. Very faintly, she would have had all rise and go away, very faintly the whole rose and moved with her. But it was only like a breath of dawn; in a moment she thought again only of Flavia and Valerian. But it had been, and might be again. Down in the pit a man, struggling with a brute, gave a short cry of agony. A man and a woman, near her, leaning from marble seats, showed gloating faces, drew in their breath with a sound of delight. She felt again the wave of pain, resistance, the effort to lift and remove, the straining as against grave-clothes.

The day, short to the most but long and long to many, drew to an end. The huge spectacle given by Valerian closed with a final clanging feat, red colour and uproar. Forth went the emperor, forth the vestals, forth the prefect, senators, knights, the prætorians, the huge people. The Amphitheatre emptied by many ways, but without, in the columned space that fronted it, all orders blended. Patrician and plebeian pressed each against the other. In the seething colour and sound, Valerian and Valeria, with them many friends, came against a great knot and concourse of market-people. At cross-directions there occurred a momentary halting. The folk, recognizing Valerian, shouted his name. He, as donor of the show, must continue to exhibit good-will. What he showed he felt. He had been long in savage forests; returning, he felt Rome and the Romans warm about his heart. He greeted the folk as they greeted him, laughter and good words passed between them. Then Lais, the freedwoman, the

flower-seller, pushed herself, or was pushed, toward the front. She had in her hand Iras her daughter. Together they came as fully as might be before Valerian and Valeria. Now Iras was a beautiful child. Valerian looked on Lais whom he remembered, but Valeria looked at Iras. "Hail, General!" chanted the flower-seller, and with deliberation pushed before her the child. "Hail, General! Did you see any fairer, out there among barbarians?"

If Valerian had or had not did not appear, for now others came between. In especial young men came, roisterers from the Palatine. These pushed against the market-folk, and one, curled and garlanded, threw his arms around Lais, who yet possessed beauty. When she released herself, Valerian and Valeria and their following had passed by.

That night was feasting in Valerian's house in Rome. The next day was business in Cæsar's house and elsewhere. The third day he went with Valeria to his country house in the Alban Hills.

At sunset the two paced the terrace, all the air sweet with flowers, spread beneath them the wide, darkling plain. They had not been alone together since the day of the games. Now they walked up and down in silence, husband and wife, in much understanding each the other, yet in much each to the other barbarian, loving much, yet at not a few points drawn widely apart. Outwardly, they were at rich, first prime, and both of them fair to the eye.

The west was crimson, their vineyards and olive trees caught the last bright light, white doves fluttered about a dovecote and walked the terrace with them.

Valerian drew deep breath. "How sweet it is to be at home! . . . Who first thought of home deserves well!"

"It is sweet. . . . Valerian, the captives, the miserable in the arena the other day! A kind of captivity and misery to be the watchers . . ."

"Have you felt that? I have felt it too. But not one man nor many men can change the world. . . . A man would be torn to pieces who said to the people, 'The games are done with, things of the past!'"

"Yes. . . . Ill customs perhaps ignorantly begun, and we go on because we have gone on so long. . . . Yet are we never to end ill, begin better?"

"In the long, long run, perhaps, yes. . . . I suppose we all sleep, or are poisoned. . . . However, I said to myself, there in the Amphitheatre, 'When needs must, I will go to these games, but not for pleasure. But not again, though I become thrice as rich as I am, shall I furnish them!'"

"I am glad of that. — See Flavia's grey dove in the almond tree!"

They watched the dove. It rose, showed dark against the carmine sky, then passed into the black depths of a cypress.

"Cease now to mourn for Flavia," said Valerian. "She will be happy."

"Perhaps. . . . Men love children, I know, but hardly as women love them."

"Nature allows that. But a man may do wisely by his children."

"Oh, ofttimes! — and ofttimes unwisely! But whatever and however he does they lie in his hand. Utterly, utterly they lie in his hand! He makes all the laws for them. He puts them to death when he wills. O earth! The mother is in his hand and the child is in his hand, and we bow our heads and worship where he bids!"

"What ails thee, Valeria? Do not I, Valerian, love thee and love Flavia?"

"Yes, Valerian, yes!"

"Then —"

"There is much cause for wonder in this world. . . . How did it ever come that men made men fight with beasts upon the sands of an arena for show? How did it ever come that men have over women the whole power of law and the state? Oh, I answer myself! It came in many ways, here a little and there a little —"

"Nature and the gods —"

"Valerian, do you believe that?"

"Yes, I believe it."

"It flatters your pride to believe it, and so you believe! . . . But I say, too, that women must have erred and erred. . . . Both you and I stray in a vast wood!"

"Rome and the parting with the child have fevered you. . . . But you were always subtle and thinking, thinking —"

"Look how the light sprinkles the plain! — Here is Faustus."

A grey-headed man leaning upon a staff came to meet them. It was Faustus the philosopher to whom Valerian gave house-room.

"Hail, Valerian and Valeria! Good is the city, but good indeed is the country! How beautiful are the olive trees and the sea of gold!"

They paced the terrace up and down, by the marble statues and the flowering trees. "Faustus, I have read that Zeno said, 'All men are by nature equal. In degree of virtue alone are they different.'"

"He said so, Valeria. And so do all Stoics, his followers."

"And slaves and captives and strangers —"

"They also. Underneath and above they are one with the master and the victor and the Roman."

"And women — and women, Faustus?"

Faustus leaned upon his staff. "They also, Valeria."

Valerian made a movement of impatience. "O Faustus, where is that last said?"

"It follows, Valerian."

"It is theory! It has never been, nor will it ever be. As we cannot free the slaves, so women cannot walk equal with men. But goodness to slaves, goodness and love to women I grant!"

Faustus was silent.

Said Valeria, "That is much to grant, but not enough."

They were standing beneath a high-raised marble figure of Ceres. Valerian struck with his hand the base of the statue. His brow darkened. "O, Valeria, you and I have struggled together before now — struggled long, struggled hard! Now we are at peace. I value peace. Let us stay there!"

"You make a slavery and call it peace!"

He stamped with his foot. "Let it be! Let it be!"

The wife raised her arms to the skies, then let them drop. She could sing most sweetly. Now, suddenly, she broke into song, a wild folk-carol of sun and earth and gods and dæmons. She sang a charmed silence upon the terrace and the garden below. Tree, vine, and flower, bird upon the bough, light in the west, seemed to dream, listening. Faustus sat upon a bench, his hands crossed over his staff, his eyes upon the brightening evening star. Valerian sighed. He leaned against the wall and shadowed his face with his hand, and the inward light beat against the

inward eye, but the eye was not yet strengthened enough to receive it strongly. The woman ceased to sing, the dusk thickened, the dank and chill of the evening were felt, they went into the house.

Later, in the great chamber, the house master and mistress being alone for the night, Valeria standing trimming the lamp that burned, fed by perfumed oil, before the little figures of the household deities, said suddenly, "She was your child — that lovely brown-haired one a woman thrust before us, leaving the Amphitheatre. She was so like you! — more like than is Flavia."

Valerian came and stood beside her. "The woman was Lais the Greek. Five years since I freed her, and bought for her a flower shop. Then we became as strangers. Thou knowest that illness I had, five years ago, and how, recovering, I changed much in my life. . . . The freedwoman has her shop of flowers, and if I remember her aright will be ever warm and kind to the child."

"What is her name — the child's?"

"Her name? . . . I cannot," said Valerian, "remember it."

From the Rhine, from post to post, along the Roman roads, came with swiftness tidings that again the Marcomanni had risen in revolt. Back to his legion, encamped upon that river, hastened Valerian. Arrived, he made junction with an endangered legion stationed inland, and drove with twin eagles against the Marcomanni. These broke, these fled; a host was slain, a host taken. The brand of revolt, dashed against earth, had its fire put out. The auxiliaries who brought to Rome, over hundreds of leagues, over Roman roads, to slavery, to the games of the Amphi-

theatre, the huge many of prisoners, brought also praise of Valerian. The victory praised him, the safety of the legions praised him. The emperor nodded, looked aslant, made the sign that kept away evil. Said one under his breath to another in the house of Cæsar, "Do not win too much nor be liked too well, for that is the road to the Mamertine!"

Valerian, far from Rome and that savour of incense and look of danger, obeyed soldierly duty and something higher. Revolt subdued, he conciliated, organized, administered, and all was done well. It took time. Months rolled away in the northern forests, by the northern streams. The months became a year, the year two years, the two three. Valerian wrote to Rome, asking permission to return for a while to family and estate. Permission was denied. He had thought that it would be so, for letters told him that ever more and more Cæsar hated other men's successes, and that, besides, certain foes of his worked against him in Rome. Upon the heels of that denial came an order to proceed to the command of a legion in Britain. That was to leave a famous legion for one not so famed. That was to leave captain and soldiers who engaged for victory wheresoever he led for others who knew him not. It was to leave a region that he knew for obscure struggles with the Caledonians at the edge of the world. Valerian sat with his chin in his hand, and pondered his own revolt — his own and the famed legion, drawing with it other legions. He shook his head; he consulted loyalty and the public good. Obeying the imperial word, he set his face to the west, he travelled long and far, and crossed the narrow sea and came to Britain and travelled the Roman road to the legion in the north. Here he stayed two years and did well, so well that at the end of that time he was sent to command not a

legion, but auxiliary troops in a poor and drowsy corner of the empire where Opportunity might be expected never to show her face. Expectation was disappointed; in the third year Opportunity appeared with suddenness. Valerian took her by both hands. His name once more became sonorous. When he had been almost ten years from Rome he was summoned home. He was sure that it was to ruin.

There were lines in his forehead, a little silver in his hair and short beard. The rime, the breath of the fir wood clung about him. In Valeria's hair there was silver. She met him alone, beneath the old olive tree, upon the slope before the villa in the Alban Hills. He had sent those with him another way; he came to her alone with, in his step, the eagerness of youth. She stood robed in white; she had for him who, in the wilderness, had increased in inward stature, a new beauty and majesty.

"Hail, Valerian!"

"Hail, Valeria!" Each held the other embraced. "Long — long — long has it been!"

They climbed the hillside. "Are you safe, Valerian, — are you safe, here at Rome, where you should be so safe —"

"Not I! To-morrow, Cæsar may send to tell me, 'Open your veins. Die, and ease me of a jealousy!' — Well, what odds? It comes one day. What matter which day?"

The old household slaves came about them. It was springtime and evening and loveliness. As they reclined at supper, as afterwards they walked the terrace, and at last in their chamber he watched Valeria. Love rekindled in him, but a graver love, a love that was beginning to think.

"We have changed," he said.

"Yes. There is a worker, a sculptor, a musician dealing with us."

"Life?"

"Life also is under its hand. . . . In these years that I have dwelled here, lonely but for it, I have felt it working. It works from a place that our places hide."

"I learned something of that in those dark, northern woods, by those cold and deathly waters. There is something more than we know or feel."

"There is a sky above the sky. But that is all I know. I do not yet breathe under it."

Days and nights passed. Valerian rested with Valeria in the villa among the hills, unbidden to Rome, possibly unthought of, perhaps unthreatened. He began to feel in the peace about him that he had dreamed that there was lightning in the clouds and an ambush in the way. And then he was bidden, he with his wife, to a feast in Cæsar's house. . . . When he came there, he saw that all the time the sky had been truly overcast.

Cæsar made a feast of phantasy and extravagance. The colours seemed all gold, or else the hue of wine. The emperor reclined, garlanded, and all the guests were garlanded, and beautiful slaves served the tables with drink and viands fantastically choice, and flower petals were shred upon them from above. Voluptuous music mixed with the silver fall of fountains. At intervals dwarfs or jugglers or gladiators made entertainment, or dancers came like snow or fire into the huge pillared room. There flowed talk and talk and laughter. Valerian and Valeria had their places where Cæsar might observe that general, too liked by soldiers and provincials! To an outcast looking in great

and fine might have seemed the feast, to an angel looking down it might have glittered evil, shouted evil.

There were many women. Valeria made to greet those with whom she had acquaintance — no great number, so shut away for so long had she lived. But they greeted back with the lips only, and very coldly. It was evident that none here wished to be called the friend of the wife of Valerian. She felt for Valerian a passion of sympathy. She sat, watching carefully her own words and smiles lest anywhere they might not serve his fortunes. She thought that now she could know no hurt save where he knew hurt.

For the most part the women here were patrician women whose minds lay rank earth for the growing of ill weeds. For the most part the men of the feast mated them well. Virtue there was in the empire, virtue even here, but here, in proportion, little virtue. . . . Valeria, regarding the women, saw Livia and Porcia and Lucilla, and others like the three.

They had riches, the energetic men of their houses gaining, long since, lands and honours and wealth. Slaves there were by the score and the hundred to take from them effort in behalf even of their own persons. They might make it if they chose, putting aside the offices of slaves. But it took virtue and hardness to make that effort, and from childhood they had had no training. One in blood and bone and force with their men, they might not be soldier, nor administrator, nor statesman, nor public official, nor trader, nor teacher, nor physician, nor orator, nor athlete, nor student in the schools. Where there were children there were slave nurses, slave tutors. The huge household, the "familia," was largely managed by skilled slaves. Everywhere initiative, restless energy, came hard

against the inner wall of law and the outer wall of custom, and they were walls to keep in prisoners! High and thick though they were, this age saw some breaking through toward freedom from that grasp of law, that backward clutch from equal standing in human rights. But the breaking through seemed futile because it went not all the way, went but the smallest portion of the way, and so could come into but weak relations with the whole.

But there was one road upon which initiative was not blocked. The patrician woman with youth, with fair youth, with beauty, with some beauty, with wit to make store gain more store, and sensual to match sensual men, might have power, power, power — illegitimate, indirect, useless and selfish power! The time was one of libertinism, and there were libertines, men and women, and they seemed to sit in the chairs of the Fates and to spin and cut the threads of destiny.

Valeria saw that Livia looked at her full, then with a laugh looked away. The man that was Livia's lover was that one who desired Valerian's command. And now Livia was placed near to Cæsar and had snared him with her thick eyelashes and the ivory tower of her throat. She saw Lucilla speaking to the man beside her, and he was that senator who most coveted Valerian's land. She saw how many of Valerian's foes were here, and that Cæsar looked blackly upon him. She thought that he had been commanded here in order that there might be snatched and perverted some word that he might drop. . . . She felt a depth of anger and despair.

Guests were yet entering. Now a movement showed beyond Cæsar a white-robed, honour-heaped figure — the figure of a priestess of Vesta, bidden to this feast. . . .

Valeria felt a shock of delight, a glow from head to foot. Her hand touched Valerian's. "Look! It is Flavia!"

"I see. . . . Show no love for anything here to-night save for Cæsar and those whom he loves."

As best she might she obeyed. Every down-drifting rose-leaf, every throb of music touched her senses like a cry of danger. She had seen in a forest doe or hare quiver when twig rubbed against twig. . . . But the vestal, her daughter, seeing her, gave an exclamation. "My mother and father — I did not know that they would be here!" She smiled upon them, down the long board — several noted it. . . . Flavia was brightly fair, and she loved lights and music and flowers and all these people. Cæsar sent her wine from his own flagon.

On, with a kind of ordered tumult, went the feast. To Valerian, aware of Damocles' sword above him, to Valeria sharing that awareness, it was long — long!

There came in a dancer. The clearing of a space for her alone, the fanfare of trumpets that brought her in, seemed to betoken her famed in her art. She came, beautiful, with brown, waving locks, half nude, dancing wonderfully. She was Iras the Greek, daughter of Lais the flower-seller.

Cæsar's guests applauded her dancing. She came on twinkling feet to one and to the other. She carried a thyrsus tipped with a pine cone, wound with leaves and blossoms. This she dipped into fountain spray as she passed, then shook it above this one and that one, showering him with diamonds. This man and that man, drunken, turning, strove to clasp her by arm or waist, but she danced away from him, shaking the thyrsus, shaking her brown locks. She spoke familiarly to any she chose, moving from point to point as lightly as thistledown.

When she came to the vestal Flavia she touched her robe with the pine cone. "Hail, priestess! In what world might thou and I be sisters?"

Flavia answered, touching with her fingers the diamonds that the thyrsus showered, "In the grave, Iras the dancer!" and laughed herself because she had answered apropos.

The dancer, flashing on, came at last to Valerian. She lifted her thyrsus. "Who is it? Who is it? I have seen him before, but not at banquets —"

"The general Valerian," said one behind her.

"Valerian!" Iras the dancer stood still, seemed with some kind of shock to receive the name, then with a laugh she raised the thyrsus and holding it in both hands, crosswise above her head, danced away on yet swifter feet. But she had stood beside Valerian, and that one who had spoken had looked from face to face. And Valerian, by one of his most few friends, had been warned against that man that he was of the host of delators, a spy and informer.

After the dancer came in gladiators. The feasting men and women sank lower. The room seemed unsteadily lit, smelled of wine and blood. The flowers withered, speech became confused, meaningless, save that always it menaced good. Cæsar sent wine to Valerian, more wine and more. He must drink, though he saw that they would have him drunken and his tongue loosened. Three came about him and drove the talk to the legions and what, given word, a mind-endowed general might do. Cæsar's cup-bearer brought him more wine. He strove to be wary in talk, but at last came a mist and he saw only that he was talking. . . . Came the last viand, the last red and golden wine, outside rose the dawn. And then without, in the misty

garden of the Cæsars, the guests yet strayed, and yet there was revelling. But at last, with the rising sun, all might go home.

Two days and Valerian received an order to return to his country-house and there hold himself captive, while before the Senate was sifted a charge of betraying the Commonwealth. Valerian went and with him Valeria. It was the late summer, and the air was sultry and there were many thunder-storms with in between a sense of burdened waiting. Morn and eve, the two paced the terrace and looked to Rome afar in the plain. They had their slaves, but freedmen, clients of Valerian, came no more as they had done, obsequious, many as bees to a garden. And old friends did not come, and kindred did not come. Only two or three came privily, speaking not of their coming either before the visit or afterwards. Faustus the philosopher, now an old man, came more than once. And all who came and all who stayed away knew that bolts were being forged with which to slay Valerian. And they trembled for themselves who were his kin or acquaintance.

Valeria would have caught the bolts in her hands, directed them if she might to her bosom only, but there was no way. But all that knew knew that she, too, would be struck, blackened, and consumed. Always, Cæsar finally to ruin one ruined many. . . . When they had been at the country-house a month those who still had come came no more. They heard that kindred and friends were being thrown into prison. Faustus brought that news, and smiling said that hardly might he come again.

"Faustus, this world!"

"There are many things to be straightened. When we have straightened one, then must we straighten another.

. . . If with all our will we could reach the centre we might straighten much at once. But that is Wisdom and few are wise!"

He spent a day and night at the villa, looked cheerfully upon them, and went back to Rome where he had work to do. He came no more, and their hearts told them that he had been taken in the net.

A slave, the woman who had nursed her, brought the dire news of Flavia, Flavia in the House of the Vestals! The two were in the garden, seated upon a marble bench, gazing idly at the fish in the sunken marble basin.

Came the slave and threw herself at Valeria's feet, clasping her knees. "Mistress! Mistress!"

"Ina! Ina! What is it?"

"I went to the foot of the vineyard. One I knew passed from the city. It is talking — it is talking —"

"Of what, Ina? Of what?"

"Oh, Flavia, mistress! — Flavia! Flavia!"

"*Flavia!*"

"Rome talks. It says that she, a vestal, has been unchaste! The proof has been gathered, even to-day she is judged and condemned!" Ina's voice rose to a shriek. "It says that the earth will be opened and Flavia be buried living!"

Valerian beat his head against the marble, but Valeria sat like the marble's self. When at last she spoke, moved her limbs, rose and went about through the place and the time and the small, slow events of existence, it was like a being drugged. In her eyes might be seen one bound down. . . . There was no help — what help was there in all Rome and the world?

It might be that the vestal was innocent, or it might be

that youth and fire in the blood and some untoward nearness and temptation had dragged her into that pit. Either way, she was to perish, seeing that certainly the people had been made to believe her guilty. Believing her so, there was no force to hold them from throwing her to the law which of old the Roman men had made. As though the two heard it with their ears, they heard the outcry of the thousands against sacrilege and broken law! They heard the outcry for Flavia's death by the old, terrible way!

In the night-time, life came back to Valeria's veins. The broken will rose and mended itself. Reason said no doing now would help, but something beyond reason yet resisted, because resistance must not be lost. She rose, she left Valerian sleeping, heavy with sorrow; she woke Ina and took from her a coarse dark mantle; she clad and sandalled herself, and silently passed from the house, and crossing the terrace, went down through the almond trees and the vineyard to the road. She had put a brown stain upon her face; stooping, in the slave's mantle, she seemed an old woman. What throbbed in her brain was the intent to reach Cæsar, at least to cry to him of the wrath of the gods.

In an hour there overtook her a cart from the hills, bearing grapes and melons to market. She begged a lift, and the boy driving let her seat herself upon the cart floor among the baskets. When he asked she told him that she was a fortune-teller, come out to the hills to search for a certain herb. — No, she had not found it. Perhaps it did not grow anywhere any longer. — "What is its name?" — "Justice."

She passed with the boy through the gates at dawn. Leaving him and his cart she stole afoot through the grey streets to the Palatine. There she found the stairway, cut

in the rock, leading to the summit and the palace where dwelt Cæsar, and here at the foot in a broad space where were always beggars and petitioners she sat down, drew her mantle yet farther over her brow, and extended her hand as if for begging. When the day was here, surely at some hour, Cæsar would come by!

Much after sunrise, a portly, good-natured-looking personage approached, passed, and passing tossed her a small coin. She put out her hand and clasped his mantle and asked if Cæsar would that day leave the palace, come this way. "It is probable — it is probable!" said the good-natured personage and went on to climb the hill.

Noon came and afternoon. A stream went up the stair, a stream came down the stair, but never Cæsar.

When the sun was westering fast Valeria crossed to a legless man under an ilex tree. "Is Cæsar never coming down to throw us money?"

"Have you feet," said the legless man, "and see not all that happens in the world? — Cæsar is not in the palace. He is at his villa on the Appian Way. He went there yesterday and with him a troop of those of the wilder sort — not sober children like you and me!"

It was twilight when she went by the House of the Vestals, and going, raised her arms to the darkening sky. Flavia was not in that house. She was away from the mercies of Vesta. She was in prison, and out by the gate of the Sabine road they opened the earth. . . .

Valeria's senses swam. To give her strength she bought bread with the coin yet in her hand, and ate it as she walked. It was now night, and the ways no longer crowded. She was moving toward the Appian Gate. Carts rumbled by, then passed horse-litters or palanquins borne by slaves;

there were people afoot, revellers and tavern-haunters, Romans on graver business, freedmen, slaves, beggars, men and old women, women of the streets and those who accompanied them. Dogs prowled, there came strains of music, flashes from swinging lanterns, stretches of vacancy and darkness. She passed a shop with a painted rose for sign and entered one of those spaces of what seemed dark emptiness. Seemed, for presently she heard before her stumbling feet and sobbing breath, and overtook a woman, going also toward the Appian Gate.

There appeared to be no one abroad here in the night-time who concerned them or gave them notice. . . . They came together to the gate, not closed yet for the night. A press of folk of the poorer sort were going and coming. A keeper stopped the two, demanding their business. "I sell flowers," said the woman, "and an order has gone wrong! I must out to my patron's to see about it. Why, you know me — Lais the Greek!"

It seemed that that was true. The man struck her upon the shoulder, took a kiss and let her by. He thought that the other woman, who seemed old and bent, was of her company. The two passed to Rome without the walls. The night was powdered with stars. Before them stretched the Appian Way with the great tombs upon it, and backward upon either hand, rich gardens and villas. There was far to go to Cæsar's house upon this road.

Lais the Greek sobbed again. "What doubt that I too die, and my shop? And what care I now if we do?"

Valeria walked in silence. She looked before her, but truly she was seeing the waste field outside the Sabine Gate.

But it seemed that the other woman had passed one

silence and not come to another. "Men — men! Dæmons are their gods and dæmons are themselves! . . . It is true what the Christians say. . . . So many years ago, Valerian, but all things find us out!"

"*Valerian,*" said Valeria. "*Lais the flower-seller.* . . . Where are you going, Lais?"

"To Cæsar's villa. You do not look old any longer. I have seen you before. Who are you?"

"Valeria is my name. . . . Why are you going to Cæsar?"

"*Valeria! Valeria!* I might have guessed that! You are going, too, to beg, beg, beg with your face against Cæsar's feet! — Oh, your daughter, too! Oh, that vestal for whom they dig a chamber under ground —"

"Where is your daughter, the dancer?"

"Valerian's daughter? In danger. Are not all things that are Valerian's in danger? I, a poor freedwoman, I too shall perish, as will you, Valeria. . . . But it is these daughters. Ai! Ai! The daughters of women!"

They made on. In the dimness the flower-seller, coming against some obstruction, stumbled and was brought to the ground. Valeria stooping helped her rise. The touch drew each to each. They stood for a moment under the stars, clinging close, each to each.

"How," asked Valeria, "is thy daughter in danger?"

"Was spawned an intelligencer, a spy! He swelled and lives to hunt out all who have blood the colour of Valerian's! Some neighbour told him. . . . Went a word to the wolf-dogs, 'Iras the dancer has blood the very colour! Perhaps in secret Valerian cherishes her, and will be hurt by her hurt, as by the vestal's —'"

"Oh-hh!"

"What does woman's moaning do? . . . They took my girl, saying that she was to dance at Cæsar's feast. — O Hecate, hear me! We thought it only a palace feast with men and women and toying and dallying! I kissed her and laughed when she went. That was yesterday. No, it was the day before yesterday. Yesterday it was that I heard through Priscus of ruin and death, blooming for all that ever were called Valerian's — blooming so for the dancer Iras!"

"O Flavia, thy woe! — O the flowers of this garden!"

"Then I went with Priscus whom I had nursed of a fever and who is a Christian and has a brother who serves a knight that is of Cæsar's band. So by littles we learned — but that brought it to this very sunset. . . . So I heard that she was taken to that villa where devil's ill is done. Cæsar is there, and men of Cæsar's bosom!"

They had come to cypress trees by a huge and marble tomb. Lais's limbs failed her, she sank upon the earth and stretched her arms along it. Valeria, standing, regarded the huge shadow of the night. Her lips moved. "Women against men — crowned men. . . . Helpless — helpless! Where they will ravin, they will ravin. Where are our arms, where are our minds, where are our souls? . . . And some they make courtesans, and some they make vestals. And the one they feed upon, and they cry for more women for food. And the other must be pure, and if she breaks their law — once, once — they slay her, making for her a terrible death! And each way they themselves are lawless and cruel. And where is any advocate, and any god?"

Lais rose from the earth — they went on together — they had miles to go. Hurrying all they might, lurking in shadows of tombs while other night-farers went by, the

night was late when they came to the grove that was Cæsar's, and the wall that enclosed a vast garden, and the long gleam, far from the road, showing that country-house, lighted still, revelling still!

They would not go to the gate and the lodge with the prætorians there — that would be almost certainly never to pass! They sought where they might climb the garden wall. A stream went by, close below the walls, flowing to Tiber. Turning from the road, they went along this water, moving out of the moonlight, under the shadow of the wall, seeking some stout twist of the over-covering ivy. What they should do when they reached the garden, when they reached the house where spread before every door would be guards and slaves, they did not know. They knew that what they did must be called hopeless. Yet was there a wildness of hope. They did not think at all of themselves. One saw only Flavia, the other Iras. They themselves were already dead, and Valerian was dead, but there were the daughters. . . .

They came, still seeking through the ivy, to a door in the wall, clamped with iron. They tried it, but it was fast, resisting all their strength. Lais leaned against it. "I tremble, I tremble! . . . O Iras! thou wast truly my all!"

They went a little farther, still creeping by the wall. The bank here was steep, the stream turbid and swollen from a recent storm among the mountains. It went by them with a hollow sound, and the moon whitened the wave. Something lay beside the bank, caught and uplifted by a great stone, half in, half out of the water. When they came to it they saw that it was the naked body of a woman. . . . Lais put her arms beneath and raised it wholly upon the bank. There was no life, and there had

been many a wrong inflicted before life went. Lais began to laugh. "Iras! Get up and dance, Iras! Dance for Cæsar, and every man his friend!"

When Valeria saw that there was no moving her, nor making her attend, nor drawing her farther, nor winning her to go back, nor help for her, nor any sense that might be appealed to, she left the flower-seller there, the dead girl in her arms. She herself went on, feeling among the ivy for that twisted stem to climb by. She found such an one, put hand and foot to it and mounted to the top of the wall, crept over it and dropped into the garden beneath. She was in a laurel grove with a white statue rising from the middle, then in a long alley of like trees. The branches arched into a low roof, the moon was shut out, she had a sense of suffocation, she felt the chamber underground by the Sabine Gate. Her hands, locked before her, beat the dark. The alley widened, she came out into the light and saw and heard Cæsar's house, flaming with lamps, yelling with drunken mirth.

Slaves stopped her ere she reached the door. Her will, one-pointed, strove to bear all through. "I have a message for Cæsar! Woe is, if he does not hear it!"

"Who let her pass? She came on a wind from the mountains. — She is a sibyl! — Cæsar may flay us if we do not let her in. — Call the Captain of the Guard!"

He came — a man who had been bred upon the hills in sight of Rome.

"I have a message for Cæsar. It imports him to hear!"

"Take the mantle from her. — Valeria, wife of Valerian, I guess that message!"

Yet she saw Cæsar, and flung herself at his feet. He was drunken and sated. "Take her away! Send her to Rome.

Let her see the vestal punished who defiled the House of Vesta!"

"Cæsar! My message —"

The emperor's eyes closed. "There was left an order to bring that same Valerian to the Mamertine. When she has seen the vestal buried, fling her with Valerian there!"

Dark was that chamber of the Mamertine where at the last she came to Valerian. She came with white hair though she was not old. They sat side by side, all things being now so equal, and feared not the coming death. When finally daggers and ropes were brought them they took the keen blades in their hands with a smile.

"How much have we been through together!" said Valerian. "This little, low door also!"

"We are greater than we know, and have been longer together than we remember. Farewell, Valerian, until I see thee again, and may it not be long!"

Each marked and drove the dagger into the vital place. The blood gushed, their hands clasped, their eyes darkened.

CHAPTER XIII

ALLEDA AND ALARAN

THE mighty oak forest, the mighty forest of beech and fir and chestnut, birch and ash, stretched north and south and east and west. Clearings there were, but the clearings soon dipped into forest. The clearings were rifts in a clouded heaven, sunny patches on a shadowed ocean. Fine threads of light, rude roads, tracks, paths, tied clearing to clearing. Timber houses rose from the open spaces. Sometimes there rose only one house, sometimes two or three together, more seldom quite a number grouped in one great clearing. The houses were of great untrimmed logs, the roofs of thatch. They were as rude as the time in the northern forest; a few houses, many huts. Fields there were, irregularly sown, and great meadow stretches by the streams for the numerous cattle. From the air an eagle might see that all these clearings, great and small, made a constellation, and that there were other constellations linked to the first by some type of road driven across leagues of forest. Taken all together, they indicated a tribe or nation of northern folk. Off in the rounding mist where the forest tracks broke, beyond leagues of smooth, succeeding forest, abode other and similar nations. And all the tribes and nations, though they were so similar, spent much of their time in warring against one another. To the southward, beyond the eagle's horizon, far and far and far beyond, were the provinces of Rome, and the power of Rome, and farther, farther, farther south, Rome

itself. And all the constellations, and all the barbarian tribes and nations hungered after the fatness thereof.

The eagle, over-flying an oaken and a beechen world, might look down upon a clearing beside a broad and limpid stream, and upon the house of Terig, chief of a Gothic tribe. The house was large and low, built of fir-wood, heavy-walled, well-roofed, a great place according to the barbarian mind. It had dependent huts in number, it looked forth upon the river where were fish, and upon fields of wheat and rye, and upon pasturage over-roamed by a vast herd of cattle, and upon the forest filled with hunters' fare. And into its great hall came, every day, to feast with Terig, a hundred Gothic men and women. And when Terig sent forth and called a folk-meet came, from clearings far and near, hundreds to the green field before the house where grew an oak so old no bard could guess when it was born. And when Terig said war came to Terig Oak all of the nation that might walk or be brought in the great ox-wagons.

It was a shield-clashing and a war-like people, tall and strong of body, both men and women. For virtues it had courage and chastity, great personal liberty side by side with a chieftain-loyalty often carried fantastically far, comrade-loyalty, a considerable feeling for truth, and some perception of justice. There held a northern and barbarian reverence for women. It had imagination, and was a worshipper of the powers of nature, vaguely personified. It had iron, but little silver and gold. It had not letters. Its bards made some amends for that. Now and again came contact — antennæ touching — with the Roman provinces to the south. Then was brought news of strange powers and gifts! There were Goths who hungered for these, as there

were many Goths who hungered for other wealth of Rome.

Sometimes the forest was dark and heavy with gloom, and sometimes it was wholly an airy gold. Sometimes it stood breathlessly silent, and sometimes it whispered and spoke. Alleda, the young maiden, hostage from a Vandal tribe, brought up since childhood in the house of Terig, liked it silent and liked it speaking. She and Alaran, the son of Terig, old to a day with her, liked it in all its ways. They wandered together in its aisles and caverns, purple and green and brown and gold, and, kneeling, drank from its springs and streams, he for pleasure drinking from her cupped hands, and she from his. They lay in the sunshine, they fled from storms; in the open glades or from the bare hilltop they looked for the rainbow.

Alleda wore a chemise of white linen and a skirt of woollen dyed gentian blue. She had shoes of doeskin and a mantle of the wool. Now her hair hung loose, and now she braided it in two long thick braids that fell to her knees. Alaran had a tunic of soft leather, brown like the wood in autumn, and leather shoes with thongs that crossed and recrossed and were tied at his knee. He had a cloak of red, and a woollen fillet around his head to hold an eagle feather, and in his belt a sheathed knife. Alleda had been given by the Vandal chief her father to Terig when she was little, pledge of quietude on the part of the Vandals. For ten years she and Alaran had roamed the forest in company. It seemed to them that they had been always together. Sometimes they quarrelled, but oftener they were good friends.

Terig, looking at them upon a time, said to himself, "If the Goths and Vandals marry there may be a son who,

one day, shall rule them both!" The idea pleased him, and he turned it over and over, drinking mead out of a great silver cup that, passing from hand to hand, had come to him from Rome, sitting beneath his oak tree of whose age no bard had record. That was when Alleda and Alaran were very young. Terig, hunting and fighting and judging, sleeping and eating and drinking, let several years go by. Terig's wife was dead, but his sister, Fritha, headed the women and gave him, when he asked it, good advice. Terig, a good giant two thirds of the time, and the other third a monstrous, ravening wild boar, went his ways and let Alleda and Alaran play another while. When they were children no longer, but boy and girl, Terig sent an embassy to the Vandal chief. His wisest warrior went and the bard who ate at Terig's table, and with them a band of shield-clashing young men. When they returned, bringing with them certain great ones from among the assenting Vandals, Terig summoned a folk-meet. Alleda and Alaran were betrothed, under the Terig Oak, in the presence of Goths and Vandals. When they were eighteen they should be wed.

Alleda and Alaran, now youth and maiden, roamed the forest or sat beside the river and bending over saw two fair creatures in the glassy flood. They had a boat named Black Swan, and they rowed in this where they would. They fished together, they found the honey hives in rocks and ancient trees, they told each other all their adventures of body or spirit. At sunrise they might be heard singing: when evening came, or on weather days when men and women crowded into the hall and the fire was heaped with wood, they sat as near each other as they might. Emberic the bard sang loudly of Gothic glory, Gothic heroes and

heroines. Alleda and Alaran, listening, kindling, sought eyes with eyes, soul with soul.

Terig, chancing to observe them one day, said to himself: "He is too much with her, too little with the young men. That is not as it should be. I cannot live forever, and he must learn to be king in his turn."

Terig turned it over before he slept that night. In the morning he summoned Alleda and Alaran and gave his Gothic commands. Henceforth they were less and less alone together.

Alaran hunted with the young men, played at games of war with the young men, went with chief men on Terig's errands to neighbouring constellations. He grew in stature and breadth of shoulder and strength of arm. His voice deepened, his mind changed. Terig Oak saw in him leader, saw in him king, when Time should beckon Terig.

Alleda sat beside Fritha and span, or walked beside the river with young women, or roamed with them the forest, or roamed alone. More and more she went alone. Thrown back upon herself she found within herself companions. But she loved Alaran and missed him. And once they met unawares by a forest stream, and all the woods were full of light, and a thrush was singing like a freed spirit. Moved they knew not how, they fled each to the other's arms. "Alleda!" — "Alaran!" Then came Terig, hunting with his son, and they sprang apart. And, presently, sitting alone, she heard, deep in the wood, Alaran's horn.

In the autumn of that year Terig, hunting afar in savage woods, had a boar's tusk driven through his thigh. His men brought him to Terig Oak on a litter of boughs. There he must lie abed, the wound doing ill. It continued

unthriving, though Fritha had healing wisdom, and though the priests came from the sacred grove and made incantations above it. Terig lay upon bear-skins, swearing and fevered and growing weak, and the wise women tried and the wise men, but none could heal the wound. Terig saw an ox-death before him, and shut his eyes in a sick distaste.

At this moment came Victorinus to the Goths.

Valentinian II was emperor, Syricius pope. Victorinus had held a bishopric, but zeal for the conversion of the heathen ate sleep from his eyes and flesh from his bones and from his heart willingness to rest in the cushioned places of the Church. He resigned his bishop's crook, took a staff of oak, tied to it a cross, drew about him ten of his spiritual sons, and with them fared from the Gallic city, till then the scene of his labours. He fared northward, crossed after many days the Rhine, fared onward, northward, and eastward. He was not for tribes and nations who might hear daily of Christ and Paul; he was for barbarians who had never heard or heard but the faintest rumour. He was told of a Gothic people that had not moved with other Goths into Dacia. Victorinus turned his face in that direction. At last he and his following came to islands in the forest ocean, came to Goths, came to Terig Oak.

He stood in his Roman dress, with the oak staff and the bound cross advanced, and ranged behind him the ten Christian men and three barbarian converts, who served him for interpreters. Not tall, in his sixtieth year, he was dark and spare and filled with fire, had eyes that glowed and a voice of gold and honey. He would speak with the king of these home-staying Goths.

"Terig is sore wounded and ill in his bed."

"O heathen folk, so much the more should we speak with your king! Else he may die unsalved."

Alaran cried, "O Roman, are you one-who-heals? A boar tusked him."

"I have healing, young man," answered Victorinus, "for direr wounds. Let me see him."

"Come, then," said Alaran. "Who heals Terig, what care I if he be stranger or home man?"

Terig lay on bear-skins, very grim, looking silently at his ox-fate. Staff in hand, Victorinus stood and regarded him, while in at the ample doorway crowded the bishop's own following and the household of Terig.

Victorinus beckoned from the ten Probus, the Milanese physician. "Heal the flesh if you can, Probus. So we may sooner come to his soul."

Probus the physician healed Terig the Goth, whereby Victorinus got permission to dwell in the forest hard-by Terig Oak, to fell trees and build for himself and his followers a house, and for his god a church. For the time being that was all he won. Terig said that he was well contented with his own gods, and yawned whether Victorinus spoke persuasively, or with a solemn and threatening air. But the newcomers might use the forest. Did not the deer and the bear do that? Moreover, Terig would send men to help in the hewing and building. And Terig would not let interfere the priests of the sacred grove.

Victorinus and the ten Christians and those who would aid them cut down great trees and trimmed logs and built a chapel in the forest and beside it a lodge for themselves. By the time it was done came the winter, with snow and ice upon the river, and with howling storms. Terig sent the men from the south skins of beasts to keep them warm,

and they made a fire in the middle of their great hut, and the smoke went up through a hole in the roof. Sometimes barbarians came and sat with them about their fire, and sometimes they went into Terig's hall. Victorinus worked with his hands and his brains. He learned that winter the tongue of the Goths, for he saw that interpreters knew not how to give gold and honey, fire and light. He closely watched the barbarian life, seeking doors into their fortress. Meeting one day Emberic the bard, he asked instruction. At first Emberic scorned him and would not give it, then came the thought of imposing Gothic glory upon the Roman mind. Emberic nodded, sat beneath a fir tree and chanted the tribal praise. Warming to the task, he threw aside the bear-skin from his shoulders. The snow was coming down, and Victorinus, shivering strongly, looked with longing upon the discarded covering, but presently repented that weakness, tore himself from base desires, braced himself to endure hardness for the gospel's sake. He sat in the snow and listened to Emberic. All in all, that winter, Victorinus did much, learned much. But all to whom he would speak, through his interpreter, or haltingly now with his own tongue, of Christ and his Bride the Church, broke away with the saying that Terig's gods were their gods. . . . The priests of the grove came to see the lodge and the chapel. They were not many. He gathered that there had been a quarrel between Terig and them, and that they held their grove on sufferance. "O God, my God!" breathed Victorinus. "This is the time — this is the time! If the barbarian king were won, all were won! And though they be blindly won, thou wouldst, little by little, enlighten their blindness!"

The priests of the grove looked darkly upon him and

his ten, and upon their fair chapel and house, and spoke with contempt and with gestures of scorn. If they might they would have driven him and his men forth, burning what they had built; doubtless, if they might, would have seized and bound and slain them upon the grey stone in the middle of their twilight wood. But they might not do any of that for fear of Terig. Speak evil of foreigners and foreign gods they might and did. But Terig's word stopped the ears of Terig's men, drew the venom from the priests' whispering.

The winter climbed toward spring. Suddenly flared war between Goths and a tribe of the Heruli. Terig and all his fighting men and Alaran his son quitted Terig Oak, marched, shouting and singing, through the forest. The women and the home men went with them a long way, but at last, parting, poured back to Terig Oak. Here Fritha ruled till Terig should return.

Now there were flowers in the forest, and unfolding leaves and the first singing of birds, the humming of bees, the passing of butterflies, and throughout the days sunshine and balm. Alleda roamed where she would, and now she dreamed of Alaran, and now she held converse with those late-found companions within herself. She did not name these, but they might be named "Love-of-Beauty," "Longing-for-Wisdom."

The timber lodge was built, the timber church was built. The altar was there, the space for worshippers, the table for communicants, the benches for listeners to the sermon. But save for Victorinus and the ten and the three converted whom they had brought with them from the Rhine, there were no worshippers, no communicants, no listeners. To Victorinus the chapel ached like his heart

for converts, for even one — one! "One, Lord, one! — for ofttimes one bringeth many!"

Victorinus walked in the forest, praying as he walked. Growing impassioned, he no longer prayed aloud, and after awhile no longer moved about, but kneeled where he found himself, at the hemlock edge of a brown dell in the wood. With clasped hands, with moveless limbs, he struggled, he wrought for that blessing. "One, Lord, one —!"

"Roman — Roman! Roman — Roman!"

Victorinus raised his eyes. There was a woman seated beneath the hemlocks upon the other side of the dell. He rose to his feet. She made no movement to come to him; she called him across to her. The bishop in Victorinus felt injury, recoiled, whereupon the saint, likewise there, laid hands upon that arrogance. "A barbarian and a woman, Lord! . . . Am I not come to barbarians, and didst not Thou Thyself, signal in Thy lowliness, ofttimes speak first with women?"

Victorinus descended the brown bank upon which he had kneeled, crossed the dell, and mounted by huge roots of trees to where sat the woman who had called. Halfway over the distance he saw who it was — Alleda, the Vandal maiden, who was to be wed to Alaran, the son of Terig.

Victorinus's heart leaped. His eye was quick, his wit was swift. "Lord, Lord, if I win her to Thee, may she not win her husband who shall be king of this people? Was that not what Patricius said, advising us who went to the barbarians to gain their queens? Lord, Lord, Thou who wishest the world to come to Thee dost not disdain to make Thy nest in women's hearts!"

He mounted to the huge root, coiled upon itself like a serpent, making a seat for the Vandal girl.

"Roman — Roman!" she said. "To whom were you kneeling over there?"

Victorinus had now, in some sufficiency, the language of the questioner. And he had his voice of gold and honey, and his eloquence of the mind, and the fire that burned in him, and the light behind the fire. Alleda listened, and her eyes were wistful, for within, and that before Victorinus's arrival, she had become the seeker. She listened, and when she rose to retrace her steps to Terig's house she said, "I will come again and listen."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow."

Day after day she turned her steps where she might meet the stranger with his message from a world out of this world. They met oftenest in the glade before the church, under trees where sang all the birds. The little timber building stood before them while Victorinus the bishop painted the Church, the spiritual Bride and Mother. He drew with strength and beauty, he painted with lovely colours; enthusiast, he was skilful to lift the soul into that fragrant air, to press to its lips the cup of sober inebriation. The chapel stood before them, the lodge and the garden that the ten brethren were making. Over all played the sunshine, sailed the white clouds.

"Where do you go?" asked Fritha of Alleda.

"I go to hear that Roman talk of his god. His god speaks to my heart more than do our gods."

"Our gods are good enough for Terig and me."

"I say naught against them," said Alleda, "but I climb past."

Victorinus preached Christ, leading her guardedly from height to height. With all his soul he would have her soul for his Lord. He saw that it was a deep soul and in need. He wished its individual salvation, and always, behind it, he saw looming tribes and nations, captured for Christ. . . .

He preached Christ, and she listened with parted lips and deep eyes. She heard of a god who cared, and that she did not perish when she died. It came hauntingly, as though she remembered that, but had forgotten and now remembered again, vividly and eternally. He preached of sin, and she acquiesced. She knew that she sinned. He preached salvation, through the love of God, and because he thought fit not to dwell here upon the terrors of his doctrine, she read it to be through her love of God as well as through God's love for her. She acquiesced; when she loved and practised good she had joy; not else. That joy was salvation. She was somewhat silent, not quickly and easily moved as were many converts of his acquaintance. Because of that seeming coldness, and because he found mind in her questions, Victorinus put his own mind fully and strongly to the work. From things she said of the gods of her people — to the Christian, dæmons — from processes of her thought that now and then she let him see — he found an undue expansiveness in her idea of good. He must prune away that wildness, bring into bounds that barbarian tolerance of ideas without kinship, show her the narrow way, the one lighted way. His will, his imagination, his genius worked; on all sides he laid siege to her soul to take it solely for Christ and the growth of His Church.

He took her in the spring-time, in her ductile youth, in the void and loneliness made by Alaran's going. He took

her in a longing of her nature for what she knew not, save that it was higher than she had climbed, in an inward trying of the wings and straining of the vision toward some cloud-banded eyrie. He preached a subtile Stair, an unseen Wing. He preached Christ, and he saw the fire slowly kindle in her eyes, and her frame begin to tremble.

One day it came to him to speak of the women in the Church of his God. He told of holy women, pure in the faith, standing fast in good works, dividers of bread to the poor, nurses and consolers of the sick, visiting the captive. He told of maidens who would not wed, but, putting by the sweetness of the flesh, remained virgin, dearer so to their heavenly Lord. He told of women who were wed, who were mothers, who turning to Christ had, some the sooner, some after years of strivings unutterable, the joy of bringing husband or son to His fold Who was only safety, only joy. He told of martyr women, told at length their suffering and triumph, told of Blandina, Felicitas, Perpetua, and many another. He told of the women of Jerusalem, of the sisters of Lazarus, of the Magdalen, of the Mother of Christ. He found, drawn into this barque, that there was much that he must say of women. The Vandal maiden stood with her eyes upon the little church set in the violet aisle of the forest. Victorinus made an end of his relation and sat looking at his clasped hands. He had not before in mind drawn these women facts together. He was moved, thinking of his own mother, who in her arms had brought him to the Church, and of his mother's mother, who had sealed her faith with her blood in the Diocletian persecution.

Said Alleda, "If it is Truth, I would persuade Alaran whom I wed."

"O maiden!" answered Victorinus, "not alone your

lord who will be king of this folk, but through him this folk, this nation! Great would be your service, and dearly would Christ smile upon you!"

That was one day. Three passed before she came again. "Tell me now of the Soul Immortal, of Heaven, and of the Healing of the Nations!"

The flowers increased in number, the trees put forth their leaves, the ice melted from every sunken, shadowed pool, the host of birds sang from morn till eve. Victorinus the bishop, with the heart on fire, and the tongue of gold and honey, gained the convert for whom he prayed. He saw her tremble and burst into a passion of tears; he saw her lift herself from the earth where she had thrown herself, kneel and stand and lift her hands, her face, to the sky; he saw in her face the breaking light of an inner heaven.

Alleda bent before the altar in the chapel in the wood, Alleda confessed Christ. The ten brethren witnessing, Victorinus baptized her. It was done in secret, so many upon the face of the earth that yet was in the grasp of the Prince of the Powers of the Air being baptized in secret. One day it should be known. . . .

It was Victorinus who advised that secrecy. Of all temporal things in this forest, he wished the marriage of Alaran and Alleda, and the continued love of Alaran for Alleda. Unknown to himself, he wished the death of Terig. If Alaran were king in Terig's place, then might Alleda, when her woman's wiles had wrought a yielding and propitious hour, then might Alleda, kneeling, say, "I am Christian: O lord and husband, become Christian with me!" Then might she bring Victorinus to him, and Alaran hearken as Terig had not, and all the Goths be baptized with their king. Victorinus dreamed so. . . .

"Why do you look so happy?" Fritha asked Alleda. "Have you dreamed that Terig scatters the Heruli, and that Alaran can hardly be told from Terig?"

Alleda laughed. "I have dreamed that Terig and Alaran both shall come into a kingdom!"

She came still to the glade by the church to be further taught of Victorinus. He had great power over her; she gave him devotion who had brought her soul bread. If her reason murmured at aught he said, she reproached herself and rocked her reason to sleep. To so much her reason said, "It is so," and she would give faith to the rest. He exalted faith, and she learned so to exalt it. He held it above all virtues, and she gave her hands, too, to holding it so.

Victorinus had now for her an affection, a solicitude. He found that she was too ready to laugh, too admiring of mere light and sun and motion, too filled with earthly life. "Lord, Lord, I confess to Thee that my lower man doth find pleasure in her so, but not my higher man, Lord! Let me teach her horror of this world, thought only of Thy Heaven! Let me show her the blackness of any here, the blackness of woman here, whom the Tempter first approached, knowing her weakness! Let me show her the filth and smallness of her soul, which yet Thou lovest and hast saved! Lord, Lord, let me make her only, solely, beggar for her soul and the soul of him who will be her husband, and the souls of this people!"

Now he taught of the Fall and Condemnation and of the Fire of Hell and Eternal Loss. Nor did he give what he taught metaphysical being, for here he erred himself, nor saw with any clearness what his words figured. But he used his eloquence, his age and subtlety, to press back

her mind as his own was pressed back, to erect before hers as before his own an image of Consternation. The Vandal woman paled and stood transfixed. Hell . . . Eternal Loss!

Back through the forest, shouting to victory, bringing spoil from the Heruli, came Terig and Alaran and the fighting men. All was rude joy at Terig Oak, joy and drinking, feasting and rest. Fighting men crowded into the hall or lay strewn like acorns around the oak; home people made a surrounding ring or pressed in and out. Emberic chanted deep and strong that victory, its incidents and its heroes. Now one warrior and now another shouted corroboration, or made a point and amended the song. Men, women and children held festival. The priests, coming from the grove, claimed sacrifice. Terig gave it from among the captured herds and prisoners. Terig Oak went in rude procession to the grove and circled the stone while the priests slew the victims, then returned to the tree and the mead-drinking. But Alleda did not go.

Alleda said to Alaran, "I will not!"

"If evil come to Terig Oak they will say, 'Because one stayed away.'"

"Say as they will, I will not!"

"What reason?"

"O Alaran, if you will listen I will tell you —"

But Alaran was angered and would not listen. But he stood between her and Terig. "Let her be!" he said to Terig and Fritha. Alaran had fought the Heruli like the thunder god descending on that land. Moreover, he had planned warfare as Terig could not plan. Now he held before the folk their joining with the broad stream of the Goths and descending like the torrents after winter

upon those famed, rich lands far to the south. Terig and Terig's men gave Alaran what he would.

Alleda left the drinking, feasting, chanting, boasting throng in Terig's hall and about the oak. She left the warrior-serving, laughing, triumphing women. She stole to the forest and to the glade by the church. "O my father!" she cried to Victorinus. "Christ is my Bridegroom! He is my All! You tell me that to keep sacred to Christ is man or woman's Heaven and the service that they owe! You tell me that the blessed Paul was right when he said that to be virgin is better than to be wed. O my father! There is love for Alaran in my heart, but now is there higher love for Christ! I would cleave to Him and wed no man —"

"No," said Victorinus. "No!"

Now he must show her that women might not always do as they would, but must serve high purposes which others devised. Somewhere in his nature he stood to worship the virgin in her, and strenuously in Gaul and in Italy had he preached virginity in man and in woman. But she must wed the king-to-be of this barbarous people, bring him and them to Christ, give them a prince who from the cradle should be Christian! "O God, who through winding ways bringest all to Thee, give me power to bind her to the horns of Thy altar —"

He made her sit before him, and through a summer afternoon he taught her her duty here. As the sun went down red, he ceased. She stood up, pale, but with eyes that glowed like the eyes of Victorinus. She raised her clasped hands, "O high God, high and most sweet! Hear me swear to Thee, that I will bring Thee Alaran and this Nation!"

Spring touched summer. Terig sat very long one eve

beneath Terig Oak, his back to the huge bole, his tankard of mead beside him. Fritha, passing, turned aside to find out his dreaming. She touched his shoulder, then his brow, she looked closely, she laid hands over his heart. Then she cried loudly. "Terig! Terig! — Alaran!"

Terig was dead. All the Goths moaned greatly for him. They came from clearings far away, they filled the dark forest with chants of sorrow. The bards strung the strings of their rude harps, they sang Terig's might and his glory and the might of dark Death. The priests of the grove played their part. A great pyre was built for Terig, at dusk it was kindled. All night the flames reddened the surrounding wood. Men and women circled the heap with cries and invocations.

Daybreak came, and the flames were gone, and the embers dying to ash. The fighting men raised upon their shields Alaran, son of Terig. They bore him so around Terig Oak. They dashed upon the tree mead and water and called it Alaran Oak. They seated Alaran in Terig's chair, and for him clashed their shields and shook their spears. Men and women blended their voices in the shouting. Alaran was king of these Goths in Terig's stead.

Alaran was tall and broad of shoulder, yellow-haired, with yellow hair upon his upper lip, with sky-blue eyes. When the shouting came to an end, he stood, and, spear in hand, promised to be as Terig. One week the folk feasted at Terig Oak.

Alaran and Alleda met by the riverside, over them willows and poplars, before them the wide stream. "Now I will that we wed," said Alaran, "when the wheat is ripe, at the midsummer feast!"

"I will so, too!"

"You are fairer than ever you were," said Alaran. "You stand in my heart, and it is bright flame and bright flowers around you!"

"As wheat and vines and rivers is my love for you and it has always been so! . . . But we must travel on, though we carry love in our arms — like a child, like a child!"

The grain ripened, the year came to midsummer. Men and women gathered to the marriage of the chief of these Goths and Alleda the Vandal. There came also, many leagues through the forest, chief men and bards of the Vandals.

Alleda came to the glade and spoke with Victorinus. "They talk around the oak of joining with other Goths and pouring south against your country!"

"The City of God is my country," said Victorinus. "Our country-love is to bring souls to Christ."

"The priests of the grove come to Alaran and persuade him to thrust out you and the ten brethren, and to tear down the church!"

"Wed him, besiege him with your spirit, win, and this little church shall give place to a great church, all this people hewing and building! But for me, have I not longed, O my Lord and God, to be counted among Thy martyrs?"

She came again after three days. Her eyes shone. "Alaran has pledged me that no harm shall come to you and the brethren, nor to my lovely church!"

"When thou art queen, child, thou shalt win him! He is further on the way than was Terig."

She sat at his feet. "O my father, tell me of wedded life in the land that Christ trod, and the lands where His Church grows! Although virginity be the highest, still even the other must be more beautiful there than here."

Victorinus kept silence for a little, pondering what he should say to this barbarian girl whom he had brought to Christ, for whom he felt affection, from whom he hoped nothing less than action that should turn forest thousands into Christians.

He thought it was more beautiful there than here. Here was a rude equality, a practical freedom of woman, stepping by the side of man, that grated harshly upon all his sensibilities. He never denied that the soul of woman was as valuable as the soul of man. That came from Christ; it must be; it was taken so. But Christ had been about the business of the City of God, and had given to Cæsar that which was Cæsar's. Christ, saying naught of the matter, had therefore let rest with man, so long as man was upon this earth, man's authority over woman. That was man's due since he was God's creature and woman but drawn from him in his sleep, his dream, as it were; man's due since Eve had sinned and tempted Adam, and God had said, *Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee!* Christ had let that rest. *As was fitting!* said underneath the breath a man within Victorinus. Where Christ had said naught, Paul had affirmed. *Yea! let it rest. It is as it should be!* in effect had said Paul. — Victorinus's mind dwelled upon the Jewish scriptures, and saw that all through it has been as it should be.

His mind returned to that Pagan life into which he had been born, which had flowed about him, which yet flowed. That Pagan life was in the power of dæmons — Jove, Apollo, Mercury, all dæmons! But even in that life God guided some things underneath, as it were through hidden ways. Splintered notions must have come, down brought from Eden and Noah's time and Father Abraham, whirled

across in some wind to Greece and Italy. Even there existed some fitnesses in common life that the dæmons had not blasted. The subordination of woman in all places where the governing word must fall — that had come by the breath of God! Even in paganry the female dæmons weighed less, ruled in lower places than the male. Even the dæmons could not overturn the Eden word.

Victorinus's imagination touched and tasted all the sweet humilities that in ages Eve had put on. He loved them in her; familiar they were and dear! This barbarous people in their northern clime, kept by dæmons huge, uncouth and dark, were even further than the old Pagan world from the Eden wind. Naught in them so honestly shocked, so scandalized him, as did that freedom in forest and field and house of the barbarian women. Hardly might it be said that they did not war; ofttimes he heard of them going in number with the men. That was barbarous, abhorrent! They were not now found among the priests, though it was said that it had been so. But there were prophetesses among them, greatly listened to. That might pass; it had been so in Bible land and other lands; so that they were curbed, and man ruled in the Church! But in these forests they gave their word in council; they with the men chose policies, laws and rulers. Victorinus's mind recoiled violently. And outdoors and within they spoke freely as did the men; they held their own; they would or they would not! A king might rule men and women, though no further than they would; the priest of the grove might chain men and women with the dæmon's chain; the old might claim reverence from the young. But man as man was not ruler, nor was woman as woman ruled.

Victorinus liked best the way to which he was used,

liked it perhaps not wholly alone because he was used to it. Because he liked it best he truly thought it more beautiful. These forest ways were but more dæmon ways for entrapping souls! Pride was a horrible evil, and pride in woman most horrible. . . . He thought of his mother and sisters and all his women kindred, and their gentle virtues. In memory their ways caressed him, soothing, pleasing him. Man needed contrast, foil. . . .

By now he had for Alleda a fatherly solicitude, affection. She was his convert, the soul saved — and the dedicated means to great ends. He thought now, sitting here pondering the matter, that he would make that which he had wrought as perfect as he could. He would plant Çhrist in the centre, and around flowers that should be of that Gardener's garden — flowers of faith, humility and obedience. He would plant them in all the ways, earthly and heavenly, so that nowhere should the dæmons be able to approach, because the flowers' beauty and fragrance should drive them back. In all the alleys of pride he would plant them.

His mind had over-travelled all this in much less time than it has taken to tell.

Alleda sat beneath a green and spreading beech, and before her across the glade rose the little church, and the house of the Christians and the garden that they worked in. She was nineteen. Her knees were bent, her head was bowed to the great and flowering Presence in her heart. She was not now inclined to look aside at things brought forward to see if they truly glowed and warmed in that Presence, or if the Presence extended not to them its mantle of light. She was in an attitude to take them on authority, and she was not perfected in disentangling authorities.

"Hearken to me, maiden," said Victorinus, "and though I preach the right abasement of woman, doubt not that I love you and that Christ loves you! . . . I would tell you, if I may find the tongue wherewith to praise her, of a Christian woman with whom I had acquaintance one time in Milan, the mother of a man, who, when he has unravelled wholly the tissue of his own errors, may gain a great name in the Church of the Living God. No saintlier might you have found than this Monica, nor no purer example to all women! I have heard another woman and a wife say that Monica, advising many wives together one day, did say this to them. 'From that time when you have heard read to you the marriage writings, do you hold them, according to God's will, as indentures whereby you are made servants, and so, keeping in memory your condition, do you in no place nor time set yourself in opposition to your husband. Only,' she said on, 'in so doing, you must in nowise betray nor slackly serve Christ, who is your Master over your master.' — Truly, child, the Church could have said no different nor better!"

"I do not understand," said the barbarian woman. "Yet there is something that comes up in my mind —"

She sat with her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands, her eyes upon the earth.

Victorinus watched her somewhat uneasily. Presently he began to speak of the just virtues of women, and he spoke in gold and honey. "More and more," he said, "you the barbarians and we the civilized will touch and clasp and mingle. Never too soon can right notions steal among you —"

He was not sure that Alleda was listening. She seemed sunk in herself. "Child!" he said sharply.

She dropped her hands at his tone, and he saw that she was smiling. "Is Alaran better than me? Christ is better. But is Alaran? I think that we are the same. Why, then —"

Iron came into Victorinus's voice. "Will you deny Scripture and set your reason against Almighty God's —"

The forest murmured, the white clouds sailed overhead, thistledown in the air, and the air thistledown in the ether. At the bottom of the glade, taking and holding the human eye, stood the little church, and from the garden beside came the sound of the brethren at work.

Midsummer was here, and Alleda and Alaran were wed. Autumn came, winter followed, spring swept in song and colour over the land.

"You believe — you believe!" said Alleda.

"Almost I believe," answered Alaran. "But I will not hasten. There is much to think of."

The days grew long and warm. When the wheat had begun to ripen birth-pangs took Alleda. As a rule barbarian women gave birth easily, but here was some difference. Alleda lay in anguish, and the sun sank and rose again and sank and the babe was not born. Fritha and the wise women wrought, but nothing was of avail. Through and around Alaran Oak a silence held save when Alleda cried out.

"Naught answers. She will die!" said Fritha.

Alaran ran through the moonlighted forest to the lodge of the Christian men. "Victorinus! Victorinus!"

The moonbeams, streaming through the open door and window, flooded the church. Victorinus was kneeling there. "Is she lightened? Is the babe born?"

"You had one with you who healed Terig's wound —"

"Alas! It was Probus who died in the winter —"

"She will die. They all say it. — Roman! She says that you have a great god. Beg your god to make her live! If she lives I will turn Christian — I and Alaran Oak and all the Goths by the river." He broke away. Victorinus heard him brush the trees as he went.

All night Victorinus lay before the altar and prayed. "O God, God, this people! Now is the day for them to come. O Lord Jesus, will it not please Thee to draw them to Thee through every forest aisle, to see them around Thy building here like the blades of grass for number? O sweet Jesus! and this little stream that runs hard by for the water of baptism. . . . And the woman herself, Lord —"

The dawn turned the sky red behind Alaran Oak. In tree and bush the bird began to sing to the bird on the nest. The mist rose like a ghost from the river. Alleda gave a great cry, then lay still. . . . Voices of women arose, rejoicing.

Fritha went to Alaran crouched by the hearth. "The babe is born!"

"Will she live?"

"Yes, yes!"

Victorinus took his staff and with two brethren behind him went to Alaran Oak.

At the edge of the forest Alaran met him. "She lives! She lives! She and the babe live!"

Victorinus lifted his staff. The morning light struck upon the cross atop. "Christ gave the boon! Pay, O barbarian, the debt thou owest!"

Alleda came out of the hut of Death and lay breathing

the air of every day, the babe beside her, in the hollow of her arm. Alaran sat by the couch spread with coarse linen of the women's spinning. Her eyes sought his. He put his yellow head down beside her. "Yes, yes. We are going to be Christians together!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE HERMITS

"SALVATION is within you. The Kingdom of God is within you." Dorotheus, hermit in the desert, kneeling in his cave mouth from two hours past midnight to sunrise, said that five thousand times, said it at last with an even sound like the clacking of a mill, the droning of bees or the voice of locusts. The east grew rosy, the sand ridges translucent, marvellously hued; up rushed the fiery sun. Dorotheus rose from his knees, took the scourge and plied it. Having done that, he next soberly got breakfast — a handful of dates, a small piece of bread broken from a long, twisted loaf, gift of the last pilgrim making round of the anchorites scattered in the desert, a measure of water from the jar in the corner. As he ate he looked across the intervening sand to the very small oasis where he cultivated a garden. The palms moved in the morning wind, tufts of green feathers cutting the absolute blue. It seemed the only motion in the world, unless it were the moving, too, of scant tufts of desert grass immediately about this cave that was no true cave but one of many ancient excavations, made, God knew how long ago, by idolatrous Pharaohs, building tombs to their own reproach!

The oasis was uninhabited save by a few birds and some small and wary four-footed and creeping life. There now came from it, having done his own foraging through the night, the jackal that Dorotheus had found, wounded and separated from the pack, and had tamed, naming it Arla

after his birthplace on the Danube. Arla trotted across the sand, rubbed himself like a dog against his master, wagged his tail, was talked with, and at last went off to the depth of the cave, to lie there out of heat and light and sleep until the pleasant dusk came again. Dorotheus uncovered with reverence, took from its shelf with clean hands the Book of the Gospels which was the cave's precious possession, took, and kneeling read the parable of the wheat and the tares. When it was done, he prayed, stretched flat before a great wooden cross fastened to the cave wall. That also done, he rose, took up the palm mat that he was weaving, and with a heap of palm fronds beside him, sat again in the opening of the cave.

This time he faced from the oasis to the wider spread of the desert, two leagues of sand waves between him and the monastery in whose *laura*, or circle of hermitages, this cavern was numbered. He with other anchorites wove palm mats and baskets. At intervals came monks, gathering up what was done and taking to the monastery, whence all were sent in trade to the nearest city. Dorotheus's fingers, that at first had been unskilful at the work, moved now with the precisest ease. Born thirty-six years before upon the Danube, of Christian parents, educated in Italy, in Verona, a soldier under Odoacer, King of Italy, left for dead on the field of Soissons, captive among the Franks, maker of a daring escape, wanderer in Spain, recipient one night of a dazzling vision, turning to the Church, catechumen, baptized, crossing to Africa, wanderer there through dangers and strange adventures, monk at last and ascetic — he had now woven palm mats for six years, woven palm mats and made his garden and walked the desert up and down.

Fast and vigil and discipline had made him lean but not emaciated, deep-eyed but not dim-eyed. In the desert were all manner of hermits, and some lived but to torture themselves, and some through long disuse of mind were nigh mindless. There were others who were "moderates." Dorotheus was of these. The greater reputation clung to the self-torturers, the chained to rocks, the unsleeping, uneating, the ever-scourging, the sealed-eyes, the drawers-back from water. To most in this time these seemed the more saintly. They were the great seers of visions, hearers of voices, wrestlers with dæmons, workers of miracles.

Perhaps Dorotheus, too, aspired to saintship, but found it not wholly upon that road. Ascetic, he yet rested human. He abode in the desert, a man of strong frame, tawny-haired, supple-fingered, with a working and a questing mind and a soul that was learning itself. For a long time he had had a life of outward adventure; now he was adventuring inward.

The sun rode high, the desert swam in heat. The sun went to the west. Dorotheus put by the mat, ate again sparingly of the bread and dates, drank of the water, then taking a hoe that he had fashioned for himself crossed the glaring sand to the oasis.

Here was neither heat nor glare, but shade rich and sweet, shade, and cool sliding water, and upon the side opposed to his cave the little garden like a sliver of Paradise, that he had made for the love of making. Dorotheus applied himself to hoeing the earth about the roots of vines which he had procured from the monastery vineyard. The grapes hung down, green yet, but when they were ripe he did not propose to eat them, nor yet to press

wine from them. The birds would eat them, the birds and Arla the jackal.

Looking east, between the palm stems, he saw the desert waves, low and high, like coloured, solidified water, saw his own cave and the expanse beyond, and far on the horizon a smudge which would be the palms of the great oasis that held the monastery. When in his hoeing he turned, there rose before him, back wall to his garden, a small forest of palms with other trees and shrubs and linking creepers. You could not see far into it: almost at once a green gloom shut down. For reasons he had never pierced it.

It might be a quarter-mile through to the western edge of the oasis, and to the desert waves on that side, low and high, like coloured, solidified water. And thence it might be two leagues and more to the palms and the springs in the desert where was builded the convent village of St. Agatha, dwelled in by a thousand nuns. And the *laura* of St. Agatha, the circle of her women anchorites, swinging out into the desert, touched at its far eastern point, as the *laura* of the monastery, swinging into the desert, touched at its far western point, the little oasis and those ridges of desert stone, long since dug into by vanished kings. And eastward from the green islet the hermit Dorotheus had his cave, and westward from it the hermit Dorothea had hers. Between them was the oasis, and each made a garden upon the edge facing his or her cavern. And between the gardens was the quarter-mile of thickly growing palms and other trees, of green gloom and netting creepers, and no track across, made by nature, or by man or woman. The quarter-mile might as well have been the diameter of the globe.

But not quite so. Each hermit, wandering in the desert that swept around the watered hand's-breadth, had taken the other's presence in gleams and intimations. Perhaps each had seen the other afar; perhaps from some sand crest each had marked the other digging in a garden. Perhaps through the wilderness between had come perceptions of human neighbourhood. Each had knowledge that two hermitages bordered this green spot in the desert — his own and a woman's, her own and a man's. Perhaps other threads of light, quiverings, vibrations, travelled to and fro by roads beneath and above all usual consciousness. But there was no such contact as is customary between neighbours pledged to one mode of life, and dwelling but a quarter-mile apart, no friendly passing of the time of day, no exchange of the fruits of the garden, no deeper converse and gifts of ideas. There was no close contact, no near vision nor speech together at all.

The two, man and woman, dwelled in caves beside fruit trees and cool water, and were weavers of palm mats and makers of gardens by virtue of being "moderates" — rather, in the eyes of the sixth century, a deplorable weakness than any virtue! Your true ascetic from the bone outward, your unadulterate hermit-saint, your anchorite with never a Laodicean smirch, abhorred oases! — These two, monk and nun, were, then, "moderates." Nevertheless, for the man to have gazed, free-willed, upon the woman, and for the woman to have gazed, free-willed, upon the man, and for the two to have stood and talked, that by either, pledged to God, and walking the sixth century, would have been taken to slant toward the unpardonable sin.

Dorotheus hoed the earth around his vines, and then he

tended orange trees, citron and pomegranate. The sun rode low, and the palms cast hugely long shadows. The sun touched the horizon, and the sand turned into rose-coloured glass. Arla the jackal came out of his den, stretched and shook himself, then trotted over the sand to the water, slipping beneath the trees. Dorotheus, too, kneeled by the water and drank. Then he shouldered his hoe and he and the jackal went up the sand slope to the cave. As they went they heard distantly the bell that was fastened about the neck of the goat that had followed the hermit Dorothea from St. Agatha. And at the turn of the night, when he waked, he heard through the thin, desert air, the crowing of a cock which she had bought with palm baskets from some desert vagrant.

The day of Dorothea had been much like the day of Dorotheus. Details might differ, but essentials did not. Before cockcrow she kneeled upon the sand before the cave, she lay upon her face and prayed. "Salvation is from within. . . . The Kingdom of God is within you. . . . O God, let the Kingdom dawn!" prayed Dorothea. When she rose the east was a pearl, and all the desert sand a pearl, and the trees of the oasis grey pearl above a rope of mist. She took the scourge of cords and used it, laid it by and prayed again, "O God, the long pilgrimage through the desert! — O God, let me lift and cleave to Thee!" Sunrise brightened the sand, gave its poised waves a thousand hues, then up came the red globe, and the day, or short or long, was here. Dorothea got her breakfast — a few raisins, a little bread, a measure of water from the jar in the corner. Across the sand, at the edge of the oasis, the goat Even I cropped its meal, and the cock Welcome strutted and clapped its wings. Dorothea was so "moderate" that she smiled to

see them both. Likewise her moderation was such that both the cave and she herself were clean.

The nun as well as the monk had a Book of the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles. Her cell, as his cell, had fastened to the wall a great wooden cross. Dorothea, standing before the sloping shelf upon which it was laid, read the first pages of the Gospel of Saint John, then stretched herself upon the rocky floor before the cross. "In the beginning. . . . O Light that shineth in darkness —"

She, also, wove palm mats and baskets; she, also, across the sand, at the edge of the oasis that faced her cell, made a garden. Her morning rites performed, she crossed the glaring sand to the shadow of the palms. She wished water to reach a spot that was more arid than it should be, and she dug with a spade, which she had begged from the convent, a canal through which it might flow. She worked with strength and expertness where at first she had worked weakly and unskilfully. Practice in digging, as in other things, was like a waking memory. . . .

This was her birthday. She was thirty-four years old. . . . She saw the house in Alexandria in which she was born, and the wealthy Claudius, her father, vaunting his marble statues, his gems, and his descent from Vigilius and Eudocia, martyred in Rome three hundred years ago, and her mother Verina, a fair-haired, silent woman, born across the middle sea, of a Roman father and a barbarian mother, and the nurse Anna with her endless story-telling, merry and sad, and other house slaves for whom she felt fondness, and her teachers Sylvanus and old Hipparchus.

Upon her knees she took out the black earth with her hands and heaped it in a wide basket. The cock Welcome pecked after her, and the bell of Even I made not far away a

rhythmic sound. . . . All her old, Alexandrian, gay companions when she passed from the schoolroom to the world. Alexandrian life — Alexandrian life. . . . The daughter of Claudius — the daughter of Claudius. . . .

The trench that she was making was growing deeper. She worked with strong, sweeping, ordered movements. Behind her stood the thickly growing palms and netting vines of that undisturbed belt between her garden and the garden of the hermit Dorotheus. . . . She found that without conscious thought she had turned so that the barrier wood was before her. She was sitting back upon her heels, the spade lying idle beside her, and she was gazing through the wood. What was a quarter-mile of tree-thronged space? . . . The daughter of Claudius — the daughter of Claudius. . . .

She sprang to her feet, left the garden and went back to the cave. She opened again the book upon its shelf and read, "*The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*" She closed the book, took the basket she was weaving and sat with it in the cave mouth. Alexandria . . . and all the crises of her life there — Claudius's daughter — Claudius's daughter! She wove the palm shreds in and out. Her fingers had been trained in fine work and upon the lute — she wove the basket very skilfully. Perhaps, in practising, she remembered, too, how one made baskets. At any rate, now she had been digging in the earth of this oasis, now she had been making palm baskets, now she had fasted, watched

and prayed, hermit in this cave, for four torrid summers and four winters of balm. Thirty-four to-day. "Lord, Lord, let me not think of me and my years —"

At sunset she heard the jackal bark. Had she not heard it she would have been startled, so much was its voice a part of this disk of earth she lived upon. She expected it as Dorotheus, on the other side of the oasis, listened for the bell of Even I and the crowing of the cock Welcome. He did not know their names, nor she that the jackal was named Arla. From pilgrims going the round of the desert anchorites each had gained knowledge that the oasis stood between the cells of the hermit Dorothea and the hermit Dorotheus. Each knew that the other was "moderate," not bitterly, keenly, marvellously ascetic. Each knew how he — how she — disappointed the pilgrims.

Night in the desert was a lovely thing. The daughter of Claudius lay and admired — the daughter of Verina gave mystic meanings to the large bright stars and the ebony and ivory of the sand — the nursling of Anna heard the palm tops telling stories — the pupil of old Hipparchus heard again read Plotinus and Porphyry — the Christian nun thought, "If it were healed how lovely were the world!" She slept, till Welcome waked her with his crowing.

However rapidly might move the hermit's inner world, however packed and thronged the spiritual time, outwardly one desert hour, one desert day, was highly like another. Nor did the inner world move always swiftly, smoothly, and into spiritual time came dry seasons. The desert disease was listlessness, attacking body and mind, listlessness, and strange spells of homesickness and of craving for red pottage. . . . The regimen for that was the scourge and prayer.

Dorotheus thought that what came upon him was that listlessness. He had known it before, and the homesickness and the craving for red pottage, known them and valorously fought them, as witnessed scars upon his shoulders no less than strong wrestlings in prayer stored up — somewhere. These moods did not come so often now, and he was prepared to fight them when they came. But this time, do what he would, the listlessness clung. Moreover, he began to see dæmons. He forced himself to work in the garden, though his arms trembled, and the palm trees seemed to be walking to and fro. Then came common sense in a flash. "And I have seen soldiers by the hundred take fever —!" But immediately upon that he merely saw and heard dæmons again; moreover, he grew heated and began to break down the vines and the bushes, "do nothing" having given place to "do everything." He would carry the palm grove up to the cave, then there would be no hot sand to cross!

Dorothea studied the four Gospels and prayed, stretched before the cross. She worked at basket-making, and finished the ditch in the garden that carried the water where she would. When the sun began to sink she walked in the desert, she and her long shadow on the sand. Even I and the cock would stay by the grass and the black earth and the water.

As she turned, Arla the jackal came out of the oasis. Welcome, much alarmed, took to a tree, the bell of Even I began to jangle. But Arla left them both alone and went straight to Dorothea. He was only a greyish-yellow, sizable, part dog, part wolf, and she presently saw that there was no wolf to-day. "Dog, dog! what is it?" she asked.

Arla went from her toward the palms, came back and pulled at her robe. "What is it? What has happened?" But he could not tell her, could only tell that something had happened, and that she should come with him. After awhile, she, being "moderate," went.

Dark was now rushing over the desert. The oasis belt, through which she had never gone, was darker than dark, thick with tree and bush and vine, uneven-floored, with sudden threads and pools of water. Small, living things rustled and scampered. Arla went through easily; the hermit behind him now struck against trees, now stumbled and fell. But some old ease of movement through woodland coming up from the very deep past, she followed on through the dark.

The palms thinned and they came into what she recognized must be the other hermit's garden, then they stepped out of the oasis. Here was the star-roofed desert, and a slope of sand to such a ridge as that in which she had her cell. With a loping gait the jackal mounted this slope and she followed. Before she reached the cave she heard Dorotheus raving in fever.

Sometimes anchorites went mad. "Is there here a madman?" thought Dorothea, and her heart beat harder. But she followed Arla, and saw that the hermit lay outside of the cave and paid no attention to her footsteps, nor to the jackal who now stood whining beside him. Here, under open sky, was yet pale light. She saw for the first time the look of the hermit Dorotheus. Stooping, she put her hand upon his bare, outflung arm. The touch burned her. He was tossing from side to side, talking to men, his companions, crying out about great rivers they must surely reach.

The hermit from beyond the oasis went into his cave, felt for and found the water jar and the hollowed gourd beside it, came forth and kneeling gave him to drink, then laved with the cool fluid his burning limbs. His ravings sank, he lay muttering. Dorothea took the water jar down to the garden, found the spring he used, drew water, and bore the jar upon her shoulder up the slope. Now was only starlight, and the voice and heavy turnings of the sick man.

She sat upon the sand at a little distance, and when the fever mounted she gave him water, and bathed with water face and breast. For the rest she watched the stars and said her prayers. Arla had gone down to his prowling in the desert, under the palm trees, in the thickets. She prayed kneeling, she prayed stretched upon her face. The night wore by, she heard across the palm tops the crowing of her cock. Here came the light — and now what must she do? "Lord, Lord, Thy will?"

She might find the first neighbour cell of this *laura*, summon its inmate to come nurse his fellow-hermit, or if he would not do that urge him to go bring help from the monastery. Doubtless that was the best thing to do, even imperatively the thing to do. Monk would help monk, and the nun might return to her cave. If there were sin in this night's contact prayer and penance might atone. . . . To find the next hermitage — that might be an all day's work! She did not know how this *laura* was placed — all day, and more than all day in the wild ocean of the desert. Then to make that anchorite attend, to make him follow as she had followed Arla! If he were of the intenser saintliness, hard work would a woman have to make him know that she was not a prince among dæmons, masking

so! "*Retro me, Sathanas! Retro me, Sathanas!*" If such an one came to see that she was human, even nun as he was monk, then still might be as great horror, as obdurate a stopping of eyes and ears. The very saintly had almost all vowed never to view again, never to speak again with a woman. If she found one who perforce listened, he might not conceive it his duty to interrupt his penance, leave his cell. . . . Nevertheless, she must go in search of a man to come —

Now sprang the rose in the east. Dorotheus's voice had sunk away. She found when she went to him that he was lying in a stupor. In the year she had spent in the convent village, before she came forth into the desert, she had seen and helped with illness enough. There came memories, too, of sickness in the great Alexandrian household, together with old tellings of Anna the nurse. She thought it not unlikely that she looked at a dying man. "Lord, Lord, Thy will?"

Dorotheus lay a long while, very ill, as ill as a man can be. After the first night and day he lay in the cave. Dorothea, a strong woman, had dragged and lifted him there. He lay where the light from the entrance fell upon him, in a wave of sunlight, or of moonlight or starlight. Sometimes, at night, he lay in firelight from a heap of twigs and dried palm fronds. That was when she thought that he would die in some moment between the coming and the going of the stars. She had found no fire in his cave, but flints from which, long and patiently striking them together, she obtained a spark with which to set alight shredded palm fibre. Embers once secured, she nursed them, fencing with stones and feeding at need, and so kept by her fire.

Food — always there were dates enough, and she

brought the ripened grapes with other small fruits from the garden. In her own garden grew lentils, and she had in her cave a measure of grain. In the scant moments when he slept she hastened down to the palms and across to her own demesne, whence she brought back with her, in her woven baskets, all of use that she could carry. Even I followed her, and at last Welcome, though he kept a distance between him and Arla. Her cave and garden came and dwelled in Dorotheus's cave and garden. She found two stones that would answer for millstones, and she ground the grain between them, and with water and salt made thin cakes and baked them before her fire. The sick man took from her fingers the crumbled food that should give him strength to fight the long fever. She pressed the grapes and strained the juice into a water cup and gave it to him when the fever sank and she thought his heart would stop. Days passed, days and days.

When he burned with fever she brought the water jar, cool-filled from the desert spring and bathed him as she would bathe a child. She nursed him as she would nurse a child, finding nothing too low for her to do. She nursed him as she would have nursed her own child, wanting only his recovery. Perhaps he was like a child to her. Perhaps here was human interest where for so long in the desert the soul had been strained toward upper realms. Perhaps the bow, unbending, rested, with fondness for its rest.

For Dorotheus, unconscious, unresisting, asceticism was sent to the winds. He was lapped in care. His frame was cooled or warmed at need. Food and water were put between his lips. His bed was made of soft, clean sand; he was watched beside by day and by night. The cavern was deep and shadowy, with outlets more than one. The

moving air refreshed it, even when the desert withered beeath the sun.

The hermit, lying there ill, became her consuming interest. She slept only when she must. She toiled for him, watched him. By now her will would have resisted another's coming to take her work — anchorite or pilgrim or monk from the monastery, or any desert wanderer. But it was the heated season, and unhealthful for wandering, and no one came.

Desiring to keep her strength, she put from herself any rigour of privation, fasting, discipline, prescribed prayers. "There will be time for all that," she said, "for, O High God, I am yet far from Thee!" So she nursed Dorotheus in the cave by the little oasis. And after a long time the fever broke.

It was night when she felt that his brow and hands were moist, that he lay relaxed and at rest, breathing naturally. He slept, and she went without the cave and faced a crescent moon. "Jackal, Jackal — Even I — Welcome! He will live! He will live! O moon and palm trees! He will live!"

Dorotheus slept, and when he waked he was conscious, but like a little child for weakness. As though he were that, Dorothea nursed him still. Several days passed; he strengthened, mind and will began their return. She kneeled beside him with fruit and a thin barley cake. He put her hand away. "Eat!" she said. "Eat!"

"I have been ill. Who are you?"

"Dorothea, from the other cave, across the oasis. I have nursed you, brother. Eat now!"

"It is sin."

"When you are well, do as you will. Now you must get strength. Eat — eat!"

She was now the stronger willed, and he obeyed. He looked at her wonderingly, then closed his eyes and slept.

He waked and slept, waked and slept. He had lain close to death's door and lain there long, and now he recovered tardily. "Why will you not go away?" he asked.

"If I did, you would die. I will go when you can stand and walk and get food for yourself."

"It is not much to die. . . . I bid you, then, go get some brother —"

"The desert is hot iron to cross. He might not come, nor know how to nurse you if he came." Dorothea, weaving baskets in the light, began to sing a hymn of the Church. She sang low and sweet, verse after verse, hymn and psalm. The tears came out of Dorotheus's eyes, he made a movement with his hands, and gave up commanding.

Day by day now he strengthened. Usually he lay silent, and she moved or sat in silence. In the cool of the day she sat without the cave, and at night she lay without it. As he strengthened, less and less did she come about him. But she sang at her work, rich chants of the Church.

Now he could lift himself, sit propped against the cave wall, put his hand upon Arla beside him, watch through the entrance Even I and Welcome, and the changing desert hues. Suddenly, one afternoon he began to speak.

"My name is Dorotheus, and yours Dorothea. . . . I suppose that we all might be gathered under one name. . . . I was born at Arla on the Danube, of Roman parents, schooled at Verona, then a soldier. I fought at Soissons, and was left for dead after the battle. The Franks took me and I dwelled captive among them. I planned an escape and made it. I wandered southward and came to

Spain and was there long time. There it was I had a vision. I saw the world ruining down, the barbarian at the gate, and within the hold mere ill doing. Then I saw the sky above the sky, and down swung a thread by which to climb. In Spain I turned to the Church, became a catechumen, at last was baptized. Then I crossed to Africa, then I found a maze of dangers. At last, through those, I came to the monastery. I have been monk for seven years, hermit here for six."

He ceased speaking. Dorothea sat by the entrance, and the slant gold sunshine turned her form to gold. She spoke. "I lived in Alexandria. My father was the wealthy Claudius, my mother was Verina, born of a Roman and a barbarian woman. My nurse was Anna, who knew as many stories as there are dates in a date-garden. I had for teachers Sylvanus and the old Hipparchus. When school was over and Verina was dead, I came to Claudius's world in Alexandria — and all above was music and dancing and flowers and laughter, and all below were gins, snares, traps, and yielding doors above deep pits. The daughter of Claudius was I called — the daughter of Claudius! Riches and pomp and vanity and madness! *Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher* — Then I saw that that was so. Then in the night-time came true seeing. Then I saw the steadfast behind the whirling, and the clear behind the muddied, and I laid down the flowers that withered. I have been nun for six years, hermit here for four."

No more was said that eve. She brought him food and he ate, and as the stars came out settled to sleep.

The next day he said, "You have been to me like a holy saint, come down from Heaven's court!"

"No," she answered. "I, Dorothea, a being full of sin

but wishing good, found you before me, ill and helpless, and did what I might. So you, a being like me, finding me before you and endangered, would have done what you might. We are equals."

The next day he stood but could not walk. "Babes have to learn," she said. "We are babes, I suppose, more often than we think!"

Having begun to strengthen, he strengthened fast. Before long he could walk. "In a little while," she said, "I shall go to the other side of the oasis."

He took time to answer, then, "The hermits Dorothea and Dorotheus, and a belt of palms wide as the world between them!"

"Yes. Much alike and far apart."

"It comes with a strange and loud sound, how much alike —"

"A week, and we shall be as we were before," said Dorothea; and blew upon the fire to make hot coals for the baking of the barley cakes.

When the week had passed he was strong enough to walk down the slope of sand to the palm trees. The eighth morning, waking, he found the water jar filled, bread made and left in fair quantity, the fire stored. But Dorothea was not there, nor Even I nor Welcome. . . . He went down to the garden, and beyond it into the palm belt, and he heard from the other side the bell of Even I. In the night-time, lying awake, he heard, at the turn to morning, the cock crowing beyond the palms.

That very day came pilgrims with two monks for guides, going about the desert for their sins, visiting the blessed anchorites who had put behind them every lust of the flesh. The pilgrims looked somewhat slightingly upon

"moderates." Yet was a "moderate" doing more than their hearts would let them do. "Moderates" rarely worked miracles, and their blessing was as silver to the extreme ascetic's gold. Yet blessings were blessings — let them get this one, and go on to the saint who for twenty years had not risen from his knees, whom the ravens fed! They went down on their own knees before Dorotheus, who said: "Brothers, the Kingdom and the King is within you. May God bless you, and give you strength to turn your eyes upon yourselves!" They had to be satisfied with that, which did not even ring silver.

Nor could they draw any relation of dæmons and marvels. Said one: "This morning we saw Eugenius who in Carthage always went blindfold for fear his eyes should behold women! Now three dæmons take the shape of women and beset him night and day! He rolls himself in thorns, and he fastens himself to a cross he has made, and the air is full of whistlings from his scourge of wire. So he keeps the dæmons ten paces away —"

Another cast up his eyes. "Women are the worst foes of the saintly!"

One of the monks said, "On the other side of this oasis there is a cave and a woman hermit."

His fellow, turning upon him, spoke harshly. "We who take pilgrims from cave to cave are commanded not to speak of that *laura* of women, brides of Christ, that approaches on yonder side. — You have sinned!"

The other beat his breast. "I have sinned!" The pilgrims stared at the palm trees and the western rim of the desert. With an ejaculation the older monk herded them toward the distant cave of that ascetic who for twenty years had not risen from his knees, whom the ravens fed.

Dorotheus, having given the blessing asked, remained silent, sitting with his hands clasped and his eyes upon the sand. Pilgrims and monks were accustomed to respect abstraction. They went away, were presently but a little group of parti-coloured dots in the immense and blinding desert.

Days passed, weeks passed, months passed. Dorotheus, recovered, dwelled alone in his cave, his garden and the desert. Across the palm belt dwelled Dorothea. The one had Arla, the other Even I and Welcome.

It was winter in this land, clear and warm, perfect weather. Suddenly, one day, one afternoon, each went inland from a garden, met the other, midway in that grove of palms. "Loneliness! . . . What harm in meeting so, in speaking so? — when all the while I feel a presence, and you feel a presence — only they are where they cannot talk together —"

They stood beneath the trees, a space of black and white between them. "Two men — two women — ascetics of the Lord — dwelling so, would sometimes come this near, would sometimes speak together! . . . Youth and the riot of youth we have put away. As though we were two men, as though we were two women, we are fellow-travellers to the City of God. . . . Would Christ say, 'Speak no word — shut your eyes, turn your head'?"

"If it were sin — but it is not! — Are we so different, you and I?"

"We are one. You are my soul, rich and good —"

"And you are my soul, rich and good —"

"Where does Christ say, 'Woman is of the dæmon, but man of the angel'? — Let us meet as one, above man and woman, equal and unharming each the other!"

"I will come to your garden once a month, and do you come to mine once a month. We will talk together a little while — a little while! And if we sin, I know it not!"

In this fashion they lived for a year. Twice twelve times they saw each other, in the freshness of the morning or the last gold of the afternoon. They sat or stood, a space of earth between, and they talked for an hour. Then the one who was the visitor turned east or west, and another fortnight went by. The year was thus made of long gold beads with jewels in between.

Then came a time of struggle and suffering. Then one of the jewels turned suddenly fire red. . . .

Then the two met for the last time in this desert or this oasis. "We thought that we were strong, but we have yet to grow. . . . Oh, far and far to grow!"

"We do not know what is strength."

"No. . . . How right or how wrong . . ."

"Dorothea — Dorothea — Dorothea!"

"Shut eyes, Dorotheus — Now I am gone — I am gone! . . . Farewell, Dorotheus!"

The two were apart, and night was rushing over the desert. Night held, starry and high and still. Then came first light, divinity of dawn in the desert. Dorotheus in his cavern, Dorothea in hers prayed, then ate and drank. Then each took a staff, and the one summoned Arla and the other Even I and Welcome. The sun was not yet up, but the sky was a rose garden. Dorotheus and Dorothea turned their backs upon the oasis, and the one went steadfastly east, and the other west.

CHAPTER XV

THE END OF THE WORLD

ROBERT LE DÉBONAIR was King of France, Robert le Diable Duke of Normandy, John XIX Pope in Rome, Héribert bishop of a diocese taking name from a certain town between Orléans and Paris, Rothalind abbess of a great house of Benedictine nuns, Rainulf the Red, baron holding a wide fief and dwelling, when he was not hunting or ravening in war or gone upon some visit with an errand of his own, in the castle above the river. Rainulf was a tiger, a stream in flood, a devastating flame. Mellissent was his wife. Isabel his sister, was gone to be a nun, and was the happier. Gerbert was a music-maker who ate in Rainulf's hall.

Black Martin was not king nor baron nor bishop, but he ruled his own that was a troop of Entertainers of the time. The time knew much wretchedness and clamoured for crude forgetfulness. Black Martin sold that by the hour, whether in market-place or castle hall or at crossroads when travellers enough gathered themselves together. He was seventy years old and yet strong as an ox. He was dour as an old wolf in winter, and in fight as bad to meet, and he had the cunning of Sire Reynard. He ruled the score of human beings composing his band with more absoluteness than King Robert ruled France. Four of the number were his sons, and four the women with his sons. Two of these were lawful wives, two were not. There were five children

in the band. The remainder, all but one, were kindred only because of Adam and Eve, and because their common occupation was to lighten the heart or impart motion to the mind. The remaining one was Gersonde, Black Martin's granddaughter, child of a dead eldest daughter and some man somewhere. Black Martin's band included buffoons, tumblers and wrestlers, a dwarf, a dancer, two singers of ballads and players of harps, a man with an ape and a fortune-teller or soothsayer.

That last was the part of Gersonde. She was a dark woman in a red gown with a blue mantle. Now Black Martin beat her, and now he listened to what she said when it came to points upon which he was perplexed. He never listened to her when she wished to stop soothsaying and play and sing with Bageron and Rosamund, or to dance with Maria. If she was insistent he beat her. He was not perplexed here; coin came into the soothsayer's lap when the singers and players and even the dancer made no collection.

It had been a year of greedy staring, but small, small collections. The lesser folk, serfs and villeins and craftsmen in mean villages or towns, gave nothing at any time unless it were coarse food, or a turn of their trade, or a night's rest in a dark and crowded hut. This year they did not give the food for it was a famine year. And the burghers in the larger towns gave little, the landed folk gave little, castle court and hall proved saving.

Black Martin spoke to Gersonde. "Soothsay for me! We have had famine years before—".

"They told us in that monastery, 'The End of the World is coming.' The priest we met on the road said, 'The End of the World is at hand.' Three days ago, in that

town, the church bells rang and our crowd left us, and gave their money into the bag at the door."

"The End of the World —! I would I might give it a rope's end! The world ends if I starve! Hark you! Soothsay that the world does NOT end — at least not in our time! Soothsay along this road so that we get money! Get money or get thy ribs broken!"

The road that they were travelling proved villainously muddy and uneven. Toward noon they found sitting by the wayside a man who led in a chain a brown bear. "This road is most fearful — plain bog and mountain! But never will it be mended, because presently comes the End of the World!"

Black Martin shook his bull shoulders and scraped the mud from a torn shoe. "We have been south. I heard a little talk of that, but nothing in a month to what is heard now in a day! Is it coming to an end in France before it comes in Aquitaine?"

"Only the learned knew much about it," said the bear-ward. "Then, all of a sudden, comes a word from the bishops that has to be read in all the churches. And it begins, 'As the End of the World is at hand —' So it began to run from mouth to mouth. — The road is muddy and it is raining? Well, the earth sweats with terror!"

It was yet raining when the troop of Entertainers came into the town between Orléans and Paris. They came through a narrow street that turned and wound upon itself to the market-place, and all the way Jouel and Baudwin beat drum and played viol, and Black Martin at the head cried in a bull's voice. "Choice Entertainment! My masters! My masters! Choice Entertainment!" They brought into the market-place a queue of followers and

attracted certain folk already there. But the rain came down hard, and the Entertainers were dead tired and downhearted and all went spiritlessly. Even fear of Black Martin could not keep it up. The crowd felt the chill rain and dissolved. The individuals that stayed, having no better place to go, were not the kind that scattered gain.

There was a black, tangled knot of lanes and alleys like frozen serpents. Mean houses cowered on either side. The Entertainers bargained for night's lodging in certain of these, and fire to cook food by. Dusk shut in, with a great monastery bell booming overhead. Pastourel the wrestler and his wife Jeanne and their three children and Gersonde the soothsayer had a hut-like place with a hearth in the middle and the smoke going out through a hole overhead. Pastourel was Black Martin's son, Gersonde's uncle. If he had not had a black temper he would have been by no means a bad giant. Jeanne was younger than he, not much older than Gersonde. Gersonde loved Jeanne and the children.

Outside poured the rain. The smoke within the hut circled acrid and heavy. Jeanne, bringing Pastourel his supper, let fall the wooden bowl and spilled the stew of little-meat and fragments of vegetables. Pastourel had a stick which he used in vaulting. He took it now and beat Jeanne, beat her much worse than he usually did, since the rain and ill-luck were in his temper. Jeanne began to cry out loudly; his hand was twisted in her long hair, and he flung her to the floor and still beat her. The children cried, huddled in the corner. Gersonde dragged at Pastourel's arm, caught at the stick. He was strong as a bull, he flung her to the other side of the hut and kept on beat-

ing Jeanne. The hut stood in a populous alley; now came folk striking at the door to know if there was murder.

Pastourel flung the door open. "I am beating my wife who spoiled my supper! Cannot a man beat his wife in peace and quietness?"

The people left the door. "It is nothing! There is nothing unlawful. He is beating his wife."

Pastourel gave Jeanne half a dozen more blows, upon the sides, the shoulders and the head, then set his stick in the corner, and flinging himself down upon the straw ate the meat and black bread without the broth. The night set in, dark, wet and chill.

Yet the next morning showed a bright sky with sunbeams that pierced even those lanes. Black Martin's band took station betimes in the market-place. That was a large, unpaved space, muddy this morning under foot, but roofed by a sky of sapphire. The great buildings that showed above intermediate structures were the church and monastery. Above them in turn, upon the rock above the town, struck against the blue Bishop Héribert's house that was nothing less than a castle. Coming back to market-place, there were found a storehouse, a guild house, other buildings rude and small, a few better houses belonging to the principal burghers. Down the opening of a street showed the peaked roof of a *béguinage*, and nearer yet to the market-place the long front of the brothel licensed by the town. The market cross rose in the middle of the market-place, and all around were the hucksters' booths.

Rude was the time and place, and rude the folk, clergy and laity, country and town, fief-holding noble, man-at-arms and servitor, serf and villein, monk and pilgrim, stroller, beggar, outlaw, leper, Jew, Saracen, and Christian.

Such as they were, samples of all skirted or traversed the market-place of this town.

It should have been a good day. But though a crowd gathered, it was nothing like so good a crowd as it should have been. Its units looked hungrily for a turn or two, then drifted away. Others took their places, but these also proved unstable. There was little real applause, hardly any loud jocularities tossed back to the Entertainers. These, like all Entertainers, had the quickest ear for any drop or hollowness in applause. Such communication received, the ray *What's the use?* saw to it that their own movements became dispirited. The people of this town had been taxed of all their money or had given it all away. At least, none of the booth people seemed to have it, for their faces, too, were long, and on the other side of the place the man with the brown bear did not seem to have it. The bells clanged noon; the folk were streaming into the church. A palmer crossed the market-place. He held up his staff that had tied to it a bit of dried palm. "It is almost One Thousand years since He suffered! Almost One Thousand years! Be not taken buying and selling, ploughing and building, laughing and clapping of the shoulder as though ye did not believe! Almost One Thousand years!" The bell clanged again. Up in the sky was a cloud. Now it floated so that it came between the sun and the town. Shadow wrapped the place. Half the people took panic fright. "Signs and signs! The End of the World —!"

Rainulf the Red rode into town with a train of twenty. He had a quarrel with Bishop Héribert; he came to make it lighter or make it darker. To the sound of ringing bells he came into the market-place on his way to the bishop's

house that was in every aspect a castle. He knew the town well, and the castle and the bishop — at least he thought that he knew the bishop. There came in the only doubt — doubt as to whether the quarrel's shade was solely a matter of Red Rainulf's will.

He rode his huge grey horse across the market-place, caring not at all that he and his men thrust against booths, made goods to fall in the mire, threatened to trample children and the old and unwary. "Rainulf the Red!" cried the people, men and women, and ducked and cringed.

"Come laugh at Baudwin Buffoon! Come marvel at Pastourel and Rayneval the wrestlers! Come listen to Barnabo's song, a circumcised Jew that became a Christian! Will you see the dwarf Seguin? — Maria the dancer that danced before the soldan of Paynimry! A soothsayer, a soothsayer! Gersonde the soothsayer, who can taste what the king has for dinner, and hear the bells in Rome!"

Black Martin's bull voice burst its way from the other side of the market cross. Rainulf the Red rode on, then turned his horse's head. His men turned with him, Gerbert the music-maker, whom, for some whim, he had brought with him, turned — Black Martin, seeing them coming, felt as though he had swallowed a stoup of wine. He spoke in an undervoice to the Entertainers, that, for this reason and that and another, he dominated as though they were his fingers: "Do your best — each one of you! Get bright coin from him — or answer to me — or answer to me!"

Rainulf the Red said, "Where is your soothsayer?"

Black Martin indicated Gersonde where she sat upon a

stone, her mantle about her. "Lord, will you have her come to your bridle-rein?"

Soothsayers, more than ordinarily, had left their youth behind them. But this one was yet young, and she had, if you chose to see it, beauty. . . .

Pastourel and Rayneval were tumbling marvellously upon the carpet they had laid. Baudwin Buffoon strutted from corner to corner. One of Rainulf's men laughed loudly, then another; Baudwin had caught them. Pastourel, planting the stick with which he had beat Jeanne, vaulted high over it. A man-at-arms clapped his hands, watched for the next trick. Maria the dancer began to bend and whirl.

"Soothsayer," spoke Rainulf, "if two fiefs quarrel, my fief and another fief, shall my fief win? Will we get it done before Christ comes, and will there be time in which I may get absolution if there has been sacrilege committed?"

The soothsayer stood still with folded hands. All light in her face seemed to go inward, and though her eyes did not close they appeared to rest from use in vision. She stood so for a span of time, while the bells yet rang and the cloud passed from overhead so that the market-place lay in sunshine. She spoke in an inward and murmuring voice. "Why do the folk dread the End of the World? That would be a fair sight, to see Christ come! — but have no fear, lord! Long, long, long will it be ere you see Him coming!"

"I will get clear before the End of the World?"

"Yea. The End of the World is not yet."

Her face became as usual. She sighed, then smiled as was the rule, and made her reverence and cupped her outstretched hand for the piece of money.

Rainulf the Red stooped from the saddle, put the coin in her hand and closed his own over it. "What is your name?"

"Gersonde, lord."

She went back and sat upon her stone. Rainulf the Red spoke to Black Martin, standing cap in hand. He spoke in a somewhat lowered, but not greatly lowered voice. He was a strong baron, and these were strollers, and it was nothing extraordinary that which he proposed. He drew his horse aside, but not much aside. He looked at the soothsayer in her blue mantle, then bargained with the head of the band. Black Martin pursed his lips, then named a sum. The Baron halved it; they finally agreed upon three fourths of the first amount. Black Martin sold his granddaughter's body and agreed that it should be found at such an hour in such a place.

Rainulf the Red and his men rode on to the bishop's castle, whither presently followed Black Martin's band of Entertainers. These gained some recompense in the great court, with dinner in the kitchens, and a night's lodging in a loft. But Black Martin gave Gersonde to the man sent for her. . . . It was not the first time he had sold her. He gave her, as before, a beating and pushed her out. She followed Gerbert the music-maker, to whom his lord had given the order to bring her to the tower in which Héribert had placed his guest.

Rainulf abode three days with the bishop; then, having made up his mind to declare war, rode away to reach safety before he did so. Among his various determinations was one in regard to the soothsayer Gersonde. At one moment he thought that she was not fair, and at another that she was so. Twice in the three days he had demanded sooth-

saying and had found a value in the words that came from behind still face and wide eyes.

He sent one to bring to him Black Martin. "The woman your granddaughter. She will be cared for. Here are three pieces of gold."

"Sire, sire, the gain she brings me —"

"Three pieces of gold. When you have quitted bishop's land you are in my land. Merchants who do not like my buying meet ill luck."

"Lord, when you have done with her —"

"I do not buy with conditions. — Are there not granddaughters enough in every land? Find yourself another!"

Black Martin returned to his band. He had not Gersonde, but he had gold in his purse. "That lord will throw her from him when his mood changes! Then will she feel her way back to us who are all she knows — for what better, Christ, can a woman do?"

Jeanne and the children wept, but that made no difference.

Rainulf the Red and his men took the road to his castle. There were several led horses, and on one of these was placed the soothsayer.

The day was cloudy, the road bad. Rainulf rode well ahead, with two or three. The body of his train, loath to leave the town, grumbled, swore, was quarrelsome among its members. Under the grey sky the country wore a desolated look. There was a field in which, earlier that morning, there had been reapers. It lay half cut, and the sickles upon the earth among the corn. Farther on, they came to the reapers themselves, hurrying along the wayside. "Where are you going, you hinds?" A young man an-

swered: "To St. Martin's shrine. It is the End of the World!"

Farther on were other folk, men and women. A priest harangued these. "Holy Church tells you, it draws nigh to a thousand years since He suffered! If the sky be not rolled back and the earth does not perish it will be because of Church's prayers. So pray to Church to pray for you! Believe, give, amend your lives! But do not leave your fields and your smithies, your tending of flocks and diking and ditching —"

The country grew wilder and more unkempt. The sky hung leaden grey. Rainulf was well ahead; depression took his followers. One turned in his saddle. "Gerbert there, with your viol! For Holy Virgin's sake, make us music!"

Gerbert dropped the reins of his horse. The beast plodded on, no fiery war-steed. Gerbert himself was little thought on, of little importance in Red Rainulf's demesne. The music-maker drew bow across strings. He played well, loving his art. He made the music that he played, and now it was merry and now it was sad. To-day he made a music that was swift and wild. "Gay, gay!" cried the men. "Fast and sweet!"

Gerbert's bow danced upon the viol strings. Then a string snapped. "Mute — mute!" he said. "The End of the World for this music!"

The old horse that he rode had fallen back, was going with the hindermost. Gerbert found himself beside Gersonde the soothsayer. She had been listening to the music. Now she spoke. "The world ends, the world begins."

Gerbert said, "To-morrow, doubtless, I shall mend the viol and play again."

They were riding side by side, and none giving them heed. "Why is it," said Gerbert, "that I feel greatly at home with you? There is here something strange, that I cannot understand. It is as though a light and warmth went from me to you and you to me."

"Some strings are stretched alike and give the same sound. — Your name now is Gerbert?"

"Gerbert. And your name is Gersonde. . . . In the Red Castle if you need help . . . But I am only Gerbert who thinks at night, and in the daytime plays before the Baron! As little as if I were a woman can I give help!"

As he spoke they came in sight of the Red Castle. Rainulf's hold was a rude, great place, moat and bridge and wall, towers and keep. It crowned a hill and looked down upon a river, and by the river cowered a wretched village of huts. Around stretched field and forest, and more forest than field. The sky hung grey. Ravens were flying above a wood, and the hill, when Rainulf's horn was blown, threw back a sullen echo.

Mellissent, Rainulf's wife, watched from the wall the troop come up the road. She had two tire-maidens with her, and she spoke to them. "Is not that a woman?"

"Yea, mistress."

"Ever he nets new birds! Well, I would I were a man!"

That was one day. Mellissent waited two days, then, Rainulf riding on business to the north, sent and bade to her presence the new-caught bird. "Stand there! . . . You soothsay?"

"Falsely when I am paid, lady, and sometimes truly when I gain naught."

"Then soothsay as to yourself."

"I cannot."

"Then will I for you," said Mellissent. "Rainulf will hold you in liking for a month, then will he wish other food. Most women have no other claim than being women; whether that is their fault or sorrow or mournful plight put upon them, I cannot say. You can tell what fortune will befall, so you may not be thrust out at gate. So long as your fortune-telling pleases Rainulf you shall have your hole in the wall and your crust of bread. 'Ware any soothsaying that does not please him! — for then you will be only woman again."

"I shall not stay the month, dame," said Gersonde.

Mellissent regarded her, chin in hand. "Have you fondness for Rainulf?"

"No."

"I will tell you some things," said Mellissent. "There forms a wish in me to speak to you. . . . I was a girl in this castle, but it was brighter then than it is now. My father and his sons were slain in battle, and Count Odo was my overlord. He would give this fief to one who fought hard and ruled hard, so one morning there rode here Rainulf to be my husband. Now I loved a man whose castle was not far away, and he was noble, and in all ways fit to carry this fief. So I stole from this castle and rode to find Count Odo, and kneeling before him begged him to give me that one for my husband. But he would not, and he held me there in his town, and sent for Rainulf, and married me to him, there in the church, and the next day we rode back to Red Castle. That was summer, and when winter came Rainulf picked quarrel with that man whom I loved. War was between them, and Red Rainulf slew my man. . . . Soothsay to me if a woman is ever and always to marry only as says father or brother or suzerain! They say that

the End of the World is coming. I care not how soon it comes if things change. If they change not, it is nothing, coming or going!"

"I cannot soothsay to-day," said Gersonde. "I only know that the world does not end and much is yet to happen."

What should happen immediately with herself was to leave the castle. She was homesick for Jeanne and the children.

But a month passed before she might win away. Then the quarrel between bishop and baron flamed from earth to zenith. Out at gate, over bridge, down the road clattered Rainulf the Red and his men. They went to the bishop's lands there to harrow, burn, and slay. The Red Castle stood emptied of fighting men.

The sun set; there followed a chill night of clouds with a few stars in between. The soothsayer crept out upon the wall, the great and small gates being fastened. She had a rope which she had made of many different woven things. This she tied about a jutting stone and flung the loose end clear. Resting upon her hands she looked over the wall and saw that it hung not far from earth. Trusting her weight to the rope she came down the castle wall. At hand was the moat, cold under the stars. She entered the water, finding it rise not higher than her bosom. Over moat she went, climbed the bank, and presently was upon wild hillside. Below were the huts of the serfs of Red Castle; these she avoided, and went her way by a cart track that took her by meadow and forest. She did not know how she should find Jeanne and the children, but she trusted to find them.

After walking for a long while she saw to the right in the

woods a red star. Going toward it she came to a woodcutter's hut, and peering in at the crack that did for window saw that it held none but women and a babe. She saw that the fire had been lighted because there was birth. She knocked at the door, and when at last, after consultation within, it was opened a little way, asked for shelter and warmth. "Naught but a woman alone?" asked she who held the door. "Sit quiet then by the fire." She entered and sat by the fire and dried her clothing.

In a corner, upon a sheepskin and some straw, lay sleeping the mother of the two-hour-old babe. An old woman sat in the red firelight, the child in her lap. The woman who had opened the door took again her seat upon a billet of wood on the other side of the hearth. She rested her elbow upon her knee, her cheek in her hand. Gersonde sat upon the earthen floor, between the two. The fire of faggots danced and glowed. The thin smoke wandered and circled in the hut before it found and went out at the hole in the roof.

"Who are you, and why are you so wet?" asked the younger woman.

"I forded a stream. I am a soothsayer, Black Martin's granddaughter."

They were not curious, or it seemed to be enough. They stayed silent and Gersonde with them. The mother and the babe slept; the old woman and the two younger ones sat somewhat huddled over the fire. Now and then one put out a hand, took a faggot from the heap, and fed the flame. The hours went by. Somewhere a cock crew.

Gersonde lifted her head, then rose to her feet. "It is time to go. I thank you all."

Said the younger woman: "Guyot and Simon have gone

with the Baron. You may stay if you wish and help with the woodcutting."

The old woman spoke. "What do they say outside about the World coming to an End? . . . What I do wish to know is this: Is there to be turn and turn about in heaven? Will the baron be the woodcutter, and the woodcutter the baron? Will man be woman, and woman be man?"

"That is not the way they manage," said Gersonde. "For then still would be unhappiness."

She drew her cloak around her, said good-bye, and left the hut. It was pink dawn, and the birds were cheeping in the trees. As she went she ate the black bread they had given her.

At noontide a man, travelling the same narrow road from the castle, came by the woodcutter's hut. He carried a viol strung over his shoulder, and a lean hound padded before him. The younger woman was chopping a felled tree, the old woman gathering faggots. They rested from their work to look at the music-maker.

"Did a woman come by here — a dark woman with a red dress and a blue mantle?"

"No woman, sir."

But the hound kept on, and Gerbert.

The Abbey of the Blessed Thorn had for Abbess a count's sister, a woman more able than the count, able, determined, genial, no more religious than Bishop Héribert or Abbot Simon, but a good ruler of her nuns, a highly competent wielder and manager of the wide fief of Blessed Thorn. The Abbess Rothalind rose early, and was a dear lover of hawking. Now, the day being fine, she was out with several of her nuns, with two falconers and a groom, and with Ermengarde, a lady accused of evil, who, pend-

ing judgement in her case, had taken sanctuary with Blessed Thorn. The morning's sport over, the train came, under blue sky and with a jingling of bells at bridle reins, to a crossroads on a bit of heath. Here it overtook a woman in a blue mantle.

The Abbess checked her horse. "Who are you, wandering here?"

"Gersonde the soothsayer. I try to find my people from whom I was parted.... I am tired with walking and wasted with hunger."

"Do you see the roofs of Blessed Thorn?" said the Abbess. "Go there, and you shall be fed and have your night's rest in the dormitory of the poor. To-morrow morn we may try your art — so that you in no wise make black magic!"

Blessed Thorn had a fair parlour, giving through an arched door upon grass and flower beds and fruit trees in a double row, and one huge linden, the resort in blossom time of nations of bees. Under this great tree, the next day, sat the Abbess, beside her a table with books and writing materials and before her a frame on which was stretched the cope she was embroidering with coloured silks and gold thread. The Lady Ermengarde likewise embroidered, and five or six nuns, all sisters or daughters of noble houses, held among them a long and narrow web which they embroidered with green and blue and scarlet. A nun seated under a pear tree read aloud the recorded lives of Saints. When she came to an end of a half-hour by the water glass, the Abbess, who would rather talk than read, motioned her to close the book. This was the Abbess's hour of refreshment from a forenoon of hard work with accounts, with orders of the executive extending

to mill and forge and ferry, outlying hamlets, forest and field, with details of Abbey discipline and with correspondence. Rest from the immediate and particular stretched its limbs naturally in the field of the somewhat removed and general.

The Abbess leaned back in her chair, drew an ample breath and looked around upon her spiritual daughters. Her eyes passing the nuns and lighting upon Ermengarde marked a tear coursing down that lady's cheek. "Saints! Saints!" spoke the Abbess. "I would save my tears till cause was fairly upon me! Here is the sun shining and poppies blooming. The lord who accuses you of first beseeching his love and then striving to poison him may be struck by God's bolt of repentance. Here is one 'may'! If he be iron to the bolt your herald may return, and with him the noblest, most valiant, strongest, and skilfullest champion in France, Normandy, Aquitaine, Chartres, or Burgundy — one that this lying lord will eat dust before! There is another 'may'! Perchance such an one will not present himself and you must take one unfamed, weak, or dull in the fight, while the accuser is strong and famed. Yet are we told that the angels protect the weak, and Michael himself may guide your champion's arm and pierce Torismond's shield and shiver his spear and avoid him from his horse and break his neck and declare him a lying, false lord! Here is a third 'may'! Consider also that you may die, my daughter, before your cause comes to combat. And again, and lastly, that the innocent who is wrongly judged and doomed and given to death is truly a martyr, and rises swiftly through purgatory to Christ and the Blessed Virgin!"

Ermengarde folded her hands from her embroidery. She

had a strong, young frame that even this dire trouble had not made weak, and an apple cheek that was, however, fast paling. "Reverend Mother, I ask myself, 'Is it a bad dream?' I pinch myself, so mad and unreal does the world seem! I have no great wealth to pay with; I shall not get a strong champion! That is a fair flower, the fancying it, but it has no root. I know that you, yourself, think I shall have good fortune if I find one who can strike a good blow, and is likewise fool or reckless or knows not Lord Torismond! Now, as to the angels and the Angel Michael. I know what we say, Reverend Mother, but do we think Lord Torismond will go down before a champion who will come to my piping, who have small dowry and no mighty kindred? . . . My case is so hard, my need is so sharp, that my eyes are clear. That miracle may happen, and I ask the prayers of Blessed Thorn that it may! But if it happens not? True it is, I may die before whether I die or live comes to be decided by combat. Truly, I grieve and madden enough to die! But I seem not to be able to do so, and, indeed, Reverend Mother, I like the sunshine and the poppies blooming. And if I get no champion, or, getting one, he cannot stand before Torismond, and if I am put to death with a cruel death, truly, though the world will say I guiltily besought Torismond's love and guiltily put poison in wine that I gave him, I shall be innocent! And I shall hope that my purgatory may be short and that I shall swiftly rise to Christ and the Blessed Virgin. But I am young, Reverend Mother, and I might be happy yet awhile here on earth, and see and learn a-many things. . . . I dig again my nails into my flesh, and I say, 'It is an evil dream!'"

"Blessed Thorn," said the Abbess, "will pray the Saints

and the Blessed Virgin and our Lord her Son that the right may prosper and the truth be shown —"

"Blessed Thorn, giving sanctuary to one oppressed, helps right and truth," said Ermengarde. "And yet I may be slain, and I am told that no more may be done here, and we know not the mind of the Saints to meward. O Blessed Mother of God, I shall be foully slain! — This, this it is that makes it all dream-like or mad-like, and makes me to wonder how all things are turned and twisted! . . . I am strong: I am let to ride, to hawk, to dance. Were I daughter of serf or villein, where is the work in field or house, the ditching and digging, the drawing and carrying, the mending and making, the cutting of wood, the swinging a reaper's sickle I should not be given, yea, made to do? . . . . This is my plaint, Reverend Mother! I can mount and manage a horse. I might have been taught to thrust with the lance, or strike with the sword. I was not so taught — no! But with long watching men at feats of arms I think that I could make some show at doing both. Saints my witness, I think that I might acquit me better than any champion I am likely to get! My quarrel it is — I have no weight of guilt upon my heart — and through me runs a white, a steadying, flame of wrath against Torismond and his lie! O God! I could do better, my own champion! If I had Thy Michael to fight for me! But few have him, and I am not of those who are so near Thy Heaven! I am of the many, like the leaves in the forest, who could do better by their own quarrel. . . . Perchance I find no champion at all, and since none fight for me I am judged guilty and perish. Should I not do better for myself than none at all? O God, I think that fighting for the truth would pour a wine into me that

should give me brute strength to slay the brute lie! Why am I not let to choose, some great angel failing, to fight in my own defence, in my own quarrel? Does the lie slay me then and there in the place of combat? Is that worse than being slain by the lie a day after, two days or three, mayhap, judged worthy of death, because no champion came, or, coming, was too weak? O God! rather should I that Torismond's lance pierced me through in the place of combat!—" She dropped her head upon her folded arms, her folded arms upon her knees. "I am young and strong! Why do they bind my hands behind me, not letting me keep my own honour?—"

The Abbess cleared her throat. "My daughter, we are women—"

But Ermengarde was not comforted by that.

The six nuns plied their needles. The blue, the green, the scarlet went into the long, narrow web. The linden flowers sent out a sweet odour; the multitude of bees shaped a sound as continuous as a fountain. The sunshine through the leaves made a net of gold. The Abbess Rothalind turned the gold thread in her fingers.

She was moved — the stitching nuns were moved. Because law and custom were what they were, it was true enough that Ermengarde might very soon be put to death as harlot and poisoner. And none in the garden believed in their heart that she was such. That perception had somehow to be squared with the time's belief as to the manifested "judgment of God." As it would take great trouble to square the two, they were able simply to decline the trouble. If Ermengarde's cause met defeat, they and all people must say, under penalty of sin, that she was justly doomed and punished. But already was in use with

them and all folk the Mental Reservation — though it was not capitalized and was given a hidden cell up a winding twilight stair. At the moment, it was allowable still to believe that Ermengarde might find a champion and that the champion might slay Torismond.

The Abbess pushed aside the gold thread and coloured silk cope and talked. It was always a relief to her to talk and not to listen, though she had that self-control that she could listen by the hour if that better served her plans. "Freedom, my daughters, is in the nunnery —" The bees hummed in the linden tree, hummed and hummed.

Her homily drew to a close. "At the World's End, how well then to be found in the shade, in the fold, about the knees of Blessed Thorn!"

Cried one of her nuns, a favourite and a bell for the thought of the others: "Reverend Mother, it grows that we cannot sleep at night for thinking that the End of the World is nigh — and how we shall meet it —"

The Abbess threaded her needle with gold thread. "It is just, my daughter, that 'how shall we meet it?' which makes so excellent a broom of this news of the End of the World —"

A lay sister came to the garden door and with her the soothsayer gathered yesterday from the heath.

The Abbess nodded. "Come, you, and tell us what you know! Soothsaying is an idle thing, but like a sandalwood box or a curious flower it passes the moment!"

Gersonde stood in the garden before the embroidering women.

"Whence do you come, and where do you go, and what is your name?" questioned the Abbess.

"Please you, I know many times less than all that,"

said Gersonde. "But I lately left a hut in the forest, and I hope erelong to find a band of Entertainers into which I was born, and I am called Gersonde the soothsayer."

"Soothsay, then," said the Abbess. And, "Ah, Reverend Mother," cried Ermengarde, "if she could tell me —"

"I cannot tell sooth every day," said Gersonde. "I would that I could!"

"Look at this lady," said the Abbess, who was good-natured because she was fearless. "Tell her if she shall find a strong champion."

Gersonde obeyed. "Her champion is in herself."

"O God, I am lost!" cried Ermengarde, and covered her forehead with her hands.

"No, no, you are not lost," said the soothsayer. "You are not lost — you are not lost. Such little words go little ways!"

"Say more," said the Abbess. "You soothsay darkly."

But Gersonde shook her head. "That is all the light that is in the dark. . . . May I go now to look for Black Martin's band where are Jeanne and the children? I thank you truly, Mother, for harbour and kindness."

However they tried, no more was to be had from her, and so she was let to go. Blessed Thorn's grey walls sank behind her. . . . She was tracing a circle, and before her, now not many leagues away, stood the bishop's town where she had left Jeanne and the children.

The day was bright, the summer dressed in green and gold. She passed a grove of slender trees, a dog ran a little way beside her, far away and veiled she heard a crowing cock. The rays of light grew slant and golden. The footpath mounted, an old hound came to meet her, in a bare

field beneath a thorn bush she found Gerbert the music-maker.

"Gersonde, I, too, was tired of the castle!"

"Now know I that it was music that I have been missing out of the world!"

They sat beneath the thorn, and Gersonde's arms were about Gerbert and Gerbert's arms about Gersonde.

The sun set. The music-maker had his cloak and the soothsayer hers. The grass was short and dry, the earth held summer warmth, the air was still. The field covered a rise of earth, islanded presently by faint streamers of mist. The moon pushed up round and golden, as though it rose above marsh, above a great river. The man and woman who had come so far lay asleep.

Morn came. They waked; he had bread in his scrip; they ate, then left the thorn tree and the islanded field. Their part of the earth turned full to the glory of the sun. They walked amid glories and splendours and blisses. . . . What they determined to do was to walk always thus together among glories and splendours and blisses. . . . When they came to consider the immediate pathway, that took them through wandering the earth together, earning and spending together. Jeanne and the children? Sooner or later they would find Jeanne and the children. Splendours and glories and blessedness. . . .

It seemed wise, when they considered it, to keep on this road of France that led again to the bishop's town. Rainulf the Red and the bishop were at war. It was a strong town. Rainulf was not likely to take it, though he might furiously plough and harrow the earth around. Nor could he reach two sparrows, flying there in the bishop's shadow. It was not likely that Black Martin was still in

this town. He would have moved on, going toward Paris. Yet was the town on the way to Jeanne and the children.

So Gersonde and Gerbert kept on to the bishop's town.

They went through a country filled with misery. Men and women, children, animals that worked for humanity and depended upon it — everywhere was misery and misery. It put out cold fingers and touched Gersonde and Gerbert. "We cannot keep our glory and splendour and bliss!"

Out of the misery rose a hectic enthusiasm, bred of misery and superstition. Every third person now struck hands together and cried, "The End of the World!" Gaunt and tattered bands went about, from hamlet to hamlet, crying, "Throw by the things of every day! It is the End of the World!" There came monks who said, "Not yet — not yet awhile, good folk! There are two years yet before the Thousand Years is spent! Go back to your fields and your houses!" But by now the pale excitement had mounted into a fanatic wish to believe in Terror. A monk was stoned who said, "It is not yet!" The contagion spread.

Gersonde and Gerbert saw in the distance the bishop's castle on the hill, then the church roof and other roofs and the town wall. They came close to the town, and here were certain huts, clustering under the shadow of the wall, ready to pour their inmates through the gate, at the first breath on the wind of Rainulf's coming. It was evening. Gerbert and Gersonde thought to enter the town in the morning; in the meantime, by a cast of art, to gain here bread and night's lodging. She knew the songs of Rosamund; he could play far better than did Bageron.

They played and sang, they gained supper and night's

rest, under the shadow of the wall. . . . In the middle of the night came Rainulf the Red, an evil whirlwind out of the darkness, strong, with five hundred men behind him. He came to strike like a battering-ram against the bishop's gates; perchance, with splendid luck, to find them weak, ill-guarded. To do that he overran, like a care-naught tempest, the huddle of houses without. . . . All was sudden waking, crying, confusion, blows, wounding, and death.

The bishop's gates were strong; the bishop was baron before he was bishop. He had a strength at hand within the town. Red Rainulf did not break the gates. Instead, they opened against him and the host the bishop had gathered poured in torrent. It whelmed Red Rainulf's men; there was a clashing as of opposing waters, a scattering and bearing back. Many on both sides were killed or hurt, some borne off prisoners. Rainulf, giving back in the night, cursing the foulness of his luck, drew off at last his diminished host.

Héribert was not ready to pursue. With shouting and flaring of torches those from town and castle went back through gate, behind wall. They took with them their wounded. Likewise there surged into the town with them the folk of those huts that now were burning, burning, fired by Rainulf's men that had fought from hut to hut, trampling, hurting, slaying, driving apart the inmates, men, women, and children. All of the bishop's folk hasted now, or were pressed and driven, one part by another, through the gates, into the town.

With them was pushed Gersonde, looking this way, that way, in the alternate glare and darkness, for Gerbert. She saw him not; Gerbert was swept away with Red Rainulf's men. Hurt, stunned by a blow from a mace,

fallen across a doorstep, he had been seen by one from Red Castle. This one knew not why the music-maker was there, but having a liking for him, called to a fellow. The two lifted Gerbert and laid him upon a horse, and bore him away with them.

Gersonde found him not; nowhere could she find him. When morn came and, with others who sought also for missing ones, she returned to the charred heaps where had stood these huts, still she found him not. Here the slain had been left in the road, and the bishop, riding forth at dawn, had seen that the bodies were flung in the river that ran past. Gersonde said, "He is dead! O End of the World, he is dead!"

Hours passed, days passed, though they passed so slowly. Gersonde, to keep her body fed and sheltered, must earn. Black Martin and his band were not here; they were gone on toward Paris. She thought of Jeanne and the children, but she thought dully, not caring greatly for any on earth. Yet she gave her body food as she could get it, and she found a kennel-like place in a black lane where the people in the house above let her sleep. She tried to sing, but the songs of Rosamund would not come, with the music-maker dead. . . . She fell back upon soothsaying. She sat in a corner of the market-place, her blue cloak drawn about her and her hand outstretched. But the bells were ringing and men and women streaming by to hear the chanting monks. "The End of the World! Presently will the moon fall and the sun go out!"

Then came a black-eyed, anxious-faced youth who said: "You are the soothsayer who was here with those wrestlers and singers. . . . Tell me if I shall have time before World's End to get to my mother in Tours?"

Gersonde's face became still. With her hands she made the passes that were not at all necessary to soothsaying, but which Black Martin had taught her to make to impress the questioner and those gathered around. She made them now without thought; they had become old habit, what her body did while the inner woman reported what dim, veiled things she might perceive. . . . The youth's stopping had stopped others. Said one, "Those are witch's passes!"

Gersonde spoke. "You shall have time — you shall have time — but you shall meet your mother on the road. She comes to find you who are herself straying afar. For all that she is crippled, she will meet you before World's End."

"How," cried the youth, "did you know that she was crippled?"

He spoke, spreading his hands, to the increasing crowd: "This is that soothsayer who was here before. She can tell when God is going to shake the stars like apples upon the earth —"

A current had set toward this corner. With it came the palmer who had crossed this place before. He came, tall and burning-eyed, holding his staff with the dried bit of palm. "What do you here who should fill the church porch? What do you here, gathered about a woman?"

One cried out of the throng to Gersonde: "Tell us when will God shake the stars like apples upon the earth?"

Gersonde made her passes in the air. "When the stars grow on an apple tree."

"When comes the End, — this week — next week?"

"Know you not," cried the palmer, "that these soothsaying women are sorceresses, leagued with the Fiend?"

"When comes the End?"

Gersonde pressed her hands against her eyes. She was weary, she wished to find heaven, she and Gerbert and Jeanne and the children. "That End of the World that some of you dread and some of you lust for is not coming. You are not ready for the End of the World! World ends when we rise to the Truth, melting into it because we are ready. Your End of the World is not at hand — no, it is not at hand!"

"Soothsayer, the thousand years is over —"

"A thousand years, and then a thousand, and it will not be!"

The palmer rent his robe and cried aloud: "She blasphemes!" He found a second in the throng. "She is a sorceress! Was she not seen, a month ago, to go out of gate, riding with Red Rainulf's men?"

At that many voices joined in. "Right — right! She was with Red Rainulf —"

The palmer cried again: "Like Eve she eats of the Tree of Knowledge — eats and betrays! Evil — evil! Where is woman there I taste evil!"

"Aye, brother, aye! Save when women are in a nunnery, or under roof with children —"

"Or yonder in the brothel —"

"Red Rainulf — She would spy and betray the town—"

"'*The End of the World comes not*' — O blasphemer!"

"Still is she sib to the Fiend and the Serpent!"

"Witch!"

"Witch!"

"Have her before the bishop!"

It was so that they had her — a throng haling her up the hill. Now Héribert had had that morning evil news of the ravening of that baron with whom he was at war. His

thoughts followed Rainulf, he contemplated putting him and all who held from him under ban, obtaining from Rome an interdict. He hardly glanced at the woman they brought. "Blasphemy and sorcery and betraying? — Put her in the prison — here is not time to judge the matter! Have her in chains till the next day of hearing!"

They brought her down into the town and put her in the black and strong place that did for town prison. She sat in the dark and thought of flowers and heard a tinkling, rippling music.

The bishop divided his fighting men into two forces; left one within the town, and with the other went forth to burn and slay in Red Rainulf's territory. . . .

In the crowded town broke forth pestilence. Now there were famine and pestilence and a wild superstition and fanatic longing for prodigies. Without the walls it was harvest-time, but few harvested. Here Red Rainulf's iron scourge prevented, and here mere willingness not to labour further, seeing that harvest-fields and all were presently to see the End! The country poured its folk into the town. All wanted company; all wished to dream of, to talk of, to await the End in company.

There came news that the bishop was worsted in fight. The church bells rang, priest and monk made all day long prayers and chanting. The pestilence was not worsted — from the crowded alleys were brought forth that day many dead. Children, too, were crying with hunger. That night, just after dusk, a great, bearded meteor passed over the town. Plain sign was that of God's early Coming — of a Coming in wrath! The palmer's voice was heard like a tolling bell. "Prepare your house — make clean this place! If there is Evil among you, cast it to the fire!"

When morning came the people crowded into the market-place, all who might coming together to bear one another company. . . . In sight of all, one of the towers of the church fell.

"*That woman who prophesied against High God and His ways* —"

They beat down the prison door and brought forth Gersonde. There was in the market a long shed where faggots were sold. Near the cross, rising from a mound of hardened earth, stood a column of stone to which at times offenders were bound. They brought a chain from the prison and chained the soothsayer to this. Then men and women ran to bring the bundles of faggots. There were enough of these to make a great pyre.

In the distance, down the street that led from the gate, began the music of a viol, a tune rich and sweet, well played. The market-place, given now to the frenzy of the frightened lower nature, paid it no heed; there was but one there who gave it heed and that was the bound soothsayer.

The music came nearer, but it did not come fast; it grew fuller and louder by littles. The music-maker came leisurely, not knowing that the wrong in the world was more immediate to-day than it had been yesterday. He walked, playing, revolving in his mind ways to find Gersonde. He played because he thought that if she were in this town that was a way to draw her. In the market-place they struck a torch among the faggots.

Gerbert came, playing, up the gate street toward the market-place. The street was empty of folk; he must go, playing, to the market-place. He played old folk-music, old airs that Bageron might have played. Then he played a new air, making it as he played, and it had in it music

of the earth and air, and the leap of fire and the flow of light and the dance of thought and the spread of the soul. So, after a while, he came to the market-place.

"What are all the people doing?"

"They are burning a sorceress who said the End of the World is not yet!"

The bow still touched the viol strings, the hand working on though the head said nought. Then within the market-place the head spoke and the hand dropped. Gerbert came to the pyre by the cross and saw that there was an end. As the strings of the viol drawn too tightly might snap, so snapped the cords of his heart. The throng, now silent, listening to the bells from the standing tower of the church, saw only that a musician fell dead, his hands closed upon the ashes of that pyre. The bells rang and rang. A monk, standing upon the steps of the market cross, began to preach. "The World Ends — The World Ends! In Eden Garden the woman leagued herself with Sin, that old serpent! Then did she tempt our father Adam who fell. Then came Death and Evil. Then was planted the vine of the World's ending, whose grapes are ripe to-day."

CHAPTER XVI

MOONLIGHT

THE moon shone full and splendid, silvering the garden. The garden was formal, paved paths outlining and enclosing flower beds geometrically shaped — squares, circles, and triangles. But the riot of flowers overslipped the edges. Flowers bloomed in multitude and made an ocean of perfume. Perpetually there was sound of water, sliding and falling water. It ran in narrow channels, and slept in a pool lined with marble, and fell from stair to stair in a cascade formed by art. Black cypress trees stood up like spires, on such a night silver spires, fairy spires. The garden belonged to a castle palace that with huge stone arms clipped it on three sides. The fourth saw cliffs and the sea, the sea like one smooth shield of silver. The moon shone so bright that it put out all but the larger stars. In the garden, in the trees, sang the nightingales.

Through a low, arched doorway came into the garden a man and a woman. "O the moon, the moonlight! O the nightingales!" They took the path that outlined a square of flowers. Followed them through the doorway a second couple — man and woman. "O the moon! Smell the orange trees!" They went the path by the orange trees. A third pair came forth — man and woman. "The moon on the sea! Hear the nightingales!" They paced around the circle of roses. A fourth pair followed — a fifth — a sixth — a seventh — an eighth. It seemed an Embark-

ment for Cythera. Here were ladies and their knights — here were knights and ladies. Amaury and Adelaide — Balthasar and Bérengère — Barral and Constance — Guibour and Mélisande — Roland and Blanche — Thierry and Laure — Aldhelm and Eleanor — Raimbauld and Tiphaine.

The moon poured splendour, the nightingales were drunken with love.

There was a perron, a curving wide stair with landings mounting from the garden to a main doorway, and here were flung cushions and cloths of bright hues, all silvered now with the silver night. Here, after some pacing of the paths, gathered the couples.

"How much lovelier than in hall where candles put out the moon! Let us stay here and weave moonshine and go to the nightingales' heaven! Let us not go indoors the livelong night!"

"It is midnight now. Dawn comes soon!"

"Let us tell tales and sing! But first we finish our question that we were debating —"

"Sing, Guibour, sing vers or canzon! Then shall we talk of love!"

"Where are Tanneguy and Beatrix?"

They came from the castle palace — Tanneguy and Beatrix. "Sing, Guibour! sing this perfect night!"

The troubadour sang — outsang the nightingales. "Love — love — love — love!" he sang.

The moon shone. When the singer ceased they heard again the nightingales. From the perron they saw, beyond the cypresses, the sea.

"O the nightingales! O the moon on the sea! O love!"

"Now let us talk! Where were we when we left the hall?"

"Women blessed and crowned by the worship of Our Lady, the Ever Blessed Virgin —"

"When God and Sire Jesus and Holy Church said, 'Men, over all the earth, you are to kneel and worship and sue for grace, for she is every man's Queen of Heaven —'"

"Then fell a ray that broke into stars! See, they are in Beatrix's hair and in Tiphaine's and Adelaide's and Mélisande's and Laure's —"

"O Tanneguy the Prince —! You borrow the nightingale's note, but you smile in the moonlight!"

"And you are laughing, too, Beatrix!"

Said Guibour: "When the moon drew us forth, it was Beatrix who was speaking against that honour downdrifted upon women —"

"O Guibour the singer! I was not speaking against it! For doing that, I know not what Holy Church would do to me! I had not even a dream wish to speak against it! But here it is — but here it is — what knights so rarely think of! What God and Sire Jesus and Holy Church say is this, 'Men and women, you are to kneel and worship and sue for grace, for she is every man's and every woman's Queen of Heaven!' — Fair and good! But the Queen is above women as she is above men — and she is in heaven and out of the world — and though the ray comes down and breaks into stars — oh, they are little stars and very faintly about the heads of women! For, see you! it is not because she is woman that she is Queen — for then were she Queen in herself and of herself — but because God and Sire Jesus chose her. . . . O knights and troubadours, do not the stars shine only about the heads of those ladies whom you choose? And though a music comes down — and I know not well what kind of music it is — yet I

know what kind troubadours and knights make of it! — Love — love! Nightingale love — rose-leaf love! Love, love!"

"What kind of love would Beatrix have?"

"True love — wide love, deep love and high love, round love and square love! Golden love out of leaden love! Lo, my diamond! Love with a myriad faces — love in the centre — love thrown afar — love sublimed —"

"Do we not love?"

"Tourney love — pilgrimage love — canzon and serenade and aubade love — glove in helm love — nightingale and nightingale love — and all for a time and a season! Then, 'Sparrow, stay at home, while I, hawk and eagle, go sailing!' But in words, 'Immortal May and Guiding Star and Saint Enshrined!' . . . But few women are Saints, and only one is Queen of Heaven. . . . The mantle of love is not wide enough, and the thread that was spun for it is not strong enough, and the loom for its weaving not great enough. . . . We cannot get the furnace as it should be, and the lead rests lead! Whether the piece is man or woman, it rests lead! Man knows not how to love woman, and woman knows not how to love man. . . . Well, I have done! Sing 'No!' to all that, Guibour, as you will — as you will!"

Guibour sang "No" as she had said. But while he sang, and when he had done, it seemed that there was poison rankling. Said Tiphaine, and she spoke half angrily and half enviously: "Have we not declared that there is a treason against knight and ladies and love? Have we not, little by little, in our garden meetings, in our love courts, worked out rules and ways? — I hold that Beatrix is traitress, and should be penanced!"

Cried Adelaide, and after her Constance: "I hold so, too!" — "And I!"

The famed in tourney, Aldhelm, spoke stiffly: "The Lady Beatrix says grievous things against love and lovers —"

Beatrix leaned against the stone, and on one side was a black cypress, and on the other a stream and torrent of roses. "Do I so, Sir Aldhelm? Truly I never meant such a thing! . . . You tourney — and this one and that one goes down beneath your spear. And Adelaide, her cheek upon her hand, sits and watches you and commends you to every Saint and the Queen of Heaven! And when you have won the wreath, you bring it upon your spear, and lay it at her feet. . . . There is beauty, Our Lady knows I would not deny it! . . . Hearken to the nightingales! Trill — trill — trill! The orange fragrance comes in waves, and the moonlight makes us silver folk!"

"Still you speak outrageously," cried Tiphaine. "But we know you study strange things, with books and alembics, sulphur and mercury, tincture and quintessence and spirit —"

"Beatrix the traitress!"

"What penance?"

More or less, all were laughing, but the laughter of some carried threads of anger. "What penance?"

"If you talk of that, penance me, too," said Tanneguy. "My mind and Beatrix's pace together!"

But when it came to the majority they would not penance Tanneguy the Prince, who was their host, nor Beatrix whose scarf Tanneguy wore in joust and battle. The moon shone, the nightingales sang, ten thousand thousand flower chalices dropped perfume, a gauze-like wind breathed here, breathed there.

Tanneguy took the lute from Guibour and sang, —

"'I dreamed the All was whole and knew Itself,
A robe it wore of million hues,
And million shapes that moved and played.
And here were flowers and here were fruit,
The vine ran here, the tree sprang there,
The root was seen, the seed, the stem,
And there were women, there were men! —
Yet all were figures in Its robe,
And when It thought, they shifted form.
Whence drew the Robe but from Itself?
And all the dreams, and all the shapes? —
O man and woman, know Thyself!
O shaken notes, re-find the chord!' —

That is my song and Beatrix's, for we made it together!"

The summer dawn began, the early summer, between spring and summer. There rang a convent bell. Cocks crew. The stars went out; the moon, like a pearl, like a fairy raft, like a bubble, hung in the west, above the sea. Behind the castle the sky spread branched with coral. The nightingales still sang, but out of sheer weariness with delight, the knights, the troubadours, the ladies, quitting the perron, went into castle.

The baron who was Beatrix's lord and husband was gone with the better part of his knights and men overseas, upon the Fourth Crusade. He had been from home a year when two barons, ill neighbours of his, combined together, and taking advantage of a disordered world, thrust against his fief and castle. Then was the place besieged, and Beatrix, the baron's wife, held it bravely and strongly.

Her lord, very far away, having seen the capture of Zara for the Venetians, now with other leaders schemed the taking of Constantinople, all in the interest of the young Alexius who would depose his uncle the Emperor, and

then, one good turn deserving another, aid the crusaders to win Jerusalem! The baron, who was able, proud, and ambitious, dreamed a kingdom of his own. Now and then he thought of his castle and fief and his son. His wife was there to keep the castle and care for the son she had borne. He loved her no more than another, but he knew that castle and son would get from her right watch and ward.... Tanneguy the Prince was Beatrix's knight — that was quite correct in a time at once highflown and very, very practical. Lord and his wife, lady and knight — and so the lady and knight never forgot the lord and his wife, what harm in poetizing? ... So the baron sailed in his ship for Constantinople, and dreamed of gold and power and Eastern delights.

Meantime, at home, Beatrix held with knowledge and courage that castle, but against her were great odds.... Then came Tanneguy the Prince, who for many a year had worn her colours. With a great force, in open field, he beat the warring barons. One was slain, the other made submission. But the castle walls lay in huge ruin, and half the keep was a flaming fire.... Tanneguy's town rose not many leagues away. Under his escort, when she had taken good order for the wounded fief, came there Beatrix and her two children, a son and a daughter. He gave her a fair house and garden, close by his own great castle.

Here she dwelled in Tanneguy's town. With her were steward and chamberlain and tirewomen from the ruined castle, and she had the two children Alard and Yolande. Tanneguy, all the world knew, was her knight, and with poesy and tourney did her honour. He visited her in her garden and hall, and often was she in his castle.

Tanneguy had a stone room with groined roof upheld by

pillars. Outside its windows, cut in the thick, thick wall, quivered ivy and myrtle, sang the birds, hummed the bees, fell the gold light or the pleasant rain. By this room was a smaller room, and in this was built a furnace, and here tables held alembics and crucibles with a many other curiously shaped vessels, large and small, of glass or metal. Vials were there, and chests great and small, balances, and instruments with which to measure, manage, and design, earths and ores in heaps, and water falling from a stone lion's head into a basin curved around by a stone gryphon. He had two men in brown who fed coals to his furnace, and for a helper an old, skilled man in green, a notable alchemist, but a lesser alchemist than Tanneguy himself. All this room held in a red-brown glow. With a magic hand and eye, it fascinated the children of Beatrix, often let to come and look from the great room or the deep, green garden. In the greater room of the stone pillars were Tanneguy's books. His time considered, he had many.

He did not love books nor study more than did Beatrix whom he called his lady and who was now his guest. Together they loved knowledge, enquiry into the source and background and flow of things.

He was prince and she was lady. Abide within the four corners of sundry conventions, acknowledge various unfreedoms, and for the rest, so long as jealousy, envy, and hatred did not look their way, they might bend, in this great room, over one book. They did so; they loved, but their age found no occasion to blame their love.

These were their personal relations. They were beginning — after far wandering in lands and times — to find that one was reality, but two illusion. They were most happy in each other's company. To be alone together in

bower or garden, or in this room of knowledge and thought, had an ancient root of sweetness, a fulness of rest and home. But now that old bliss was rising into wider space. They were together even when, to eye or touch, they failed of physical nearness. They began in all things each to feel, to perceive, the other. Far and near, then and now, began to fade, divisions and limitations to grow of less account. Once these had seemed unclimbable walls, unleapable gulfs. Now they began to perceive that the gulfs were filling, the walls crumbling. . . . It came with a far-away perception that all walls and gulfs were arbitrary, temporary. . . . In the meantime it was sweet to work together in this old stone room.

Often and often she brought the two children with her and they played in the little garden without. Sometimes Tanneguy watched her playing with the children; sometimes the four of them played. She taught the children well, and especially did she teach the girl Yolande. She would have her leap and run, toss and catch again, ride and swim and draw a bow. She would have her look and know and think, perceive, divine. Came to Tanneguy's castle a wise and famed Discoverer, a man who dreamed and then went forth to find how the dream and the truth tallied, who fitted ships and made little known shores better known, and unknown places known, who dreamed of outer ocean and how to reach east from west and north from south. He talked in hall for all to hear, and he talked in the stone-lined room when there were fewer by. Tanneguy and Beatrix sat with him here, listening and questioning. Beatrix kept by her the child Yolande, willing enough to stay, her hand in her mother's, her head against her mother's knee.

Said the old Discoverer: "Lady, bring your son to listen, who, when he is grown, may do more than listen! Your daughter must listen to that which will content her with women's world."

But Beatrix said: "Worlds melt into one another. I would have her listen to that which will discontent her!"

Whereat the old Discoverer laughed, and said that he had himself found discontent valuable.

Time passed. On a certain day Tanneguy and Beatrix watched the furnace glow, and in the crucibles metals soften. The men in brown, the old man in green, moved about; there were red and amber lights, and shadows formless and shadows forked. There were the sound of fire and the sound of water, and the show of strange shapes of glass and copper vessels. And, a presence of power, there dwelled with the rest the philosophical notions behind these experiments, these endeavours — transmutation, transformation, *prima materia* and the shapes it took, and why it took the shapes — law, law, and what or who abode in law, yet could and did make slow change in its body and its ways. . . .

Tanneguy and Beatrix, after biding long in the room of the red and the gold, came out together into the larger room. Without the lancet windows the rain was streaming. They sat upon a bench before an oaken stand where was spread a notably made copy of the Book of Democritus. The two sat down. "Book of Democritus — Book of Crates —" said Tanneguy. "I would that we had that Book of Chema that gives its name to our art, that Messires the fallen angels wrote and gave to the women they married!"

The rain beat against the windows. In this room was a

fire of wood. It sent out a thin smoke. Light and shadow struggled between the pillars beneath the groined roof. There came a blast of wind.

"We two in a cave together —" said Beatrix.

"We two in a forest together —"

"We two fighting each the other, over I know not what. . . . It has been so long ago."

"I beat down and wronged you —"

"Oh, but I wronged you, too —"

"I was selfish, fierce, vain, proud, and jealous —"

"My body bound my mind. I was more weak than water . . . I grew false to myself and all things."

"There was no true love."

"No true love."

"Then were we driven apart. . . . We were taught, or we began to teach ourselves —"

"Yes. . . . Old, dim miseries. . . . Then there unfolded a higher world. . . ."

"Often the old plucked us back. . . . But we guarded the flame with our hands."

"Yes. . . . The old world is afire, consumed for the new!"

"That is the meaning of sacrifice."

"That is the meaning of sacrifice."

The rain dashed, the wind beat, the firelight danced.

"Years like the raindrops or the sands of the sea. . . . Years to come like the raindrops or the sands of the sea."

"There were old unions, and they seemed true. . . . The flutes breathed, the drums beat. . . . But now something stranger, sweeter, higher, more pervasive —"

"In the cave, the forest, the plain, and ancient cities we never saw that we were steadfastly one."

"We are steadfastly one. . . . O may that which is faint knowledge become knowledge shining like the sun!"

"Above, around, beneath, and through these modes and accidents —"

"Till modes and accidents melt away —"

"And the true gold is made."

They sat before the fire and the wind beat and the rain poured.

The next day was high and clear. In the garden of the house that Tanneguy had given her, Beatrix and the two children and the tiremaiden Maeut played at ball. Came from the house the chamberlain Enric. "Lady, my lord has sent messengers from overseas!"

She went indoors, into hall. She knew the messengers, Robert of the Good Lance, a doughty knight, Hugh of the Mount, Conon the Clerk. "Greeting, Sir Robert and Sir Hugh! Greeting, Conon the Clerk! — How is my Lord Raymond?"

"He is well, lady, and in high fortune."

"I am glad that he is well and in high fortune. . . . Did my letters come to him, telling him of war against lands and castle?"

"They came, lady."

"And that Tanneguy the Prince held as guests in all honour me and the children?"

"Your letters came in safety, lady. He sends you this letter in return."

She took and read, then sat a long time silent. Then she said, "You know, Sir Robert and Sir Hugh, and Conon the Clerk, what he bids?"

"Lady, he has won from the Greek lands and villages and a town and a huge castle. After a time he will redeem

his vow as to the Holy Sepulcher. But now he is duke of those lands and would establish his dukedom in strength and in glory. For his fief here, it is given in my charge, who am to place my hands for him in the hands of Count Henry. But for you and his children Sir Hugh of the Mount is to bring you into ship at Marseilles, whence sails a fleet on All Saints' Day. Sir Hugh and Conon the Clerk shall return with you, and you shall have chamberlain and steward and what maidens you will. When you come to Constantinople many will meet you and bring you and his children in pomp and state to your new home in a greater castle than you have ever known, where is wealth you have never known. His son he will train to win kingdoms, and his daughter he will marry to the son of his comrade-in-arms, Anseau the Red, who holds the neighbouring city."

Beatrix stood up. She spread her hands, her face was pale between the braids of hair. "Sir Robert of the Good Lance and Sir Hugh of the Mount and Conon the Clerk, give me time alone in which to look at this you bring —"

That was afternoon. Then next morn came Tanneguy. "Yes, I have heard. He sent me words of thanks, in the tone of the Emperor. . . . You and I must speak alone."

"Let us go to the space behind the cypresses."

This was truly where none might see or hear. Underfoot spread short, dry grass, and around went a wall, thick and high, of dark, fine leaves, fine-woven and dark like crape, and overhead was the blue vault. There were three stones placed for seats. The two sat down, and she folded her arms upon her knees and laid her head upon her arms.

"Beatrix, if you will say 'I will not go!' I will hold you here with all my men and all my might!"

"That kind of warrior dies in you, Tanneguy. That kind that lives in him."

"Long years I might hold you — !"

"Long, earthly years of war and loss and death of lovers — a-many lovers dying for one pair —"

"He is strong with Holy Church, and I am a man suspect. But with compliances and gifts I might buy —"

"No, no, you could not! Do we not know that occasion is wished against you? . . . Excommunication for me and for you, and over your lands long interdict. . . . Leaden pall of woe and anguish, heavy on ten thousand folk —"

"Say then we may not do it. What then?"

"O Tanneguy, are we not bound prisoners, you and I?"

The wind bent the grass and sighed in the cypresses. Tanneguy struck his hands together. "I am weary of the unfreedom of women!"

"And the unfreedom of the sons, the sons of women!"

"Beatrix! Beatrix! What shall we do?"

"I shall go overseas. With Alard and Yolande, I shall go overseas."

"And I, Beatrix? Shall I not take ship and follow?"

"Ah, no! Ah, no!"

"Yes!"

"No!"

"You will live and die far, far away!"

"What is to live — what is to die? . . . Yet a knife turns in my heart!"

"And in mine."

"Many a thing there is in this world that is barred away from light. . . . Tanneguy, Tanneguy! It is the task and the path, the ship to be built and the land to be found!"

"Freedom . . ."

"That is what it is to be a knight. If you are a man — if you are a woman — that is what it is to be a knight."

"Yea, in truth. . . . But Beatrix, now, the knife in my heart!"

"And in mine!"

The winds were stilled, the cypresses, like a cloud ring, kept out the world. The blue arch above was no tale-bearer. They wept in each other's arms.

Tanneguy the Prince made princely entertainment for Sir Robert of the Good Lance and Sir Hugh of the Mount and Conon the Clerk. He wove wreaths of knightliness and with them adorned the ways that Beatrix trod to the day of All Saints. Came about her Amaury and Adelaide — Balthasar and Bérengère — Barral and Constance — Guibour and Mélisande — Roland and Blanche — Thierry and Laure — Aldhelm and Eleanor — Raimbauld and Tiphaine. Again was the garden, but an autumn garden. Again was moonlight, and the nightingales' singing, but now they sang ancient love and ancient pain. The leaves coloured, the leaves turned brown and sere, the leaves fell. . . .

A train of knights accompanied Hugh of the Mount and the Lady Beatrix and the two children to the port where waited the fleet. Tanneguy was with them, and rode beside Beatrix. All came upon a midday to the great inn of the port. In the morning the ships would sail. Alone in a room of the inn, red from the setting sun, Tanneguy and Beatrix said farewell.

"*What we live for now is to make the gold* —"

"*To build the world where love lives as one* —"

In the red morn of All Saints' Day the great ship sailed.

Tanneguy the Prince watched from the sea strand. It went forth under sails like stairs of clouds, it dwindled until it was only a star in the east. Then distance came between, and only faith could know that there was there a star.

CHAPTER XVII

THEKLA AND EBERHARD

EBERHARD, Albrecht, and Ulrich, wandering students, came into Hauptberg on a winter noon, and knowing the town, made straight for the Golden Eagle, an inn loved by all vagabond students, young and not so young, "new men," "poets" as against schoolmen, lovers of the pagan knowledge, droppers of corrosives upon the existing order, prophets of a world behind this-world, the humanist left. The Golden Eagle stood in an angle of the town wall, high red-roofed, shining-windowed, kept by Hans Knapp and Bertha his wife. The December sun made vivid all the red roofs of Hauptberg, it turned the huge cathedral into something lighter than stone, it tossed nodding sheaves of light among the prosperous burghers' houses, it overwrote the walls of a monastery of Augustinian Hermits, it added scroll and circle of its own to the ornamented storied front of the mighty guild hall, and garmented the winter trees in the university close. The bright and nipping air put ripe apple colour into the faces of the various street-farers. These moved quickly, with bodies slightly slanted, arms folded; if they were well-to-do, in woolen and furred mantles. The poor also moved quickly, with unmantled shoulders shrugged together. The town musicians were somewhere at practice. One heard a great drum and horns.

In a number of the street-farers showed a degree of

excitement, an eagerness to exchange speech and views with acquaintances, or even with non-acquaintances. This itch was evident in many who encountered the incoming, wandering students. "From Wittenberg way? And what is the news?"

Eberhard moved, a sinewy, bronzed, square-faced, blue-eyed fellow, in a green jerkin and a brown cloak. Ulrich was solid and blond, to the eye a benevolent young burgher, and to better apprehension a ramping dare-devil. Albrecht, slight, dark, and quick as a lizard, was the "poet," with emphasis. He carried upon his back Virgil and Terence and Ovid, Cicero, and Seneca and Juvenal bound in a pack with Averroës, Avicenna, and Avicebron, and when he was not in earnest made good love songs and praised the vine. When he was in earnest he treated with vitriol the garden of Holy Church, much overgrown with weeds.

The three were in wild spirits. They had news and they gave it. Some who received were terribly angered thereby, and some took with more or less evident pleasure, with a kind of half-frightened exultation. One or two said that wandering students were bred by the father of lies. A student from the university saying this more loudly than was prudent, Ulrich, moving amiably forward, took him by his girdle, swung him overhead, and set him — *plank!* — in the gutter skimmed with ice. A brawl threatened, Ulrich ready enough to stay for it. But Albrecht cried out that he was in ecstasy, that he had a vision of the Golden Eagle, that Hans Knapp was putting a log on the fire, Frau Knapp drawing the ale, and Gretchen Knapp setting a pasty on the table! So they swung from the drenched student and his somewhat timid backers. They had made miles that morning, and hungered and thirsted,

and they loved the Golden Eagle. That is Albrecht and Ulrich loved it; Eberhard was a stranger in Hauptberg.

Here was the steep red roof, and the swinging, creaking Eagle sign, and the benches in the sun beneath the eaves, and the open door, and out of the door coming a ruddy light, a good smell, and a sound of singing.

"That," said Albrecht, "is the voice of Conrad Devilson!"

"Where Conrad is, is Walther von Langen."

"Good meeting with them both!"

Conrad Devilson beat with his tankard upon the table of the Golden Eagle.

"That day of joy,
That lovely day,
When Aristotle,
Thomas Aquinas,
Albertus Magnus,
William of Occam,
Duns Scotus,
Peter the Lombard.
The monk,
The priest,
John Tetzel,
The Archbishop of Mainz,
The bull *Exurge Domine*, and
The Power of Rome
Shall pass away!"

He had a voice that boomed and reverberated. In came the three wandering students. "Why, here are others of the time's darlings!" cried Walther von Langen.

Conrad Devilson put down his tankard and got to his feet. "Eberhard, Eberhard! Welcome to Hauptberg!"

He left the table to put his arm around Eberhard. "This is the man who saved me from wolves in the Black Forest!

— Then sat we down in the snow and re-ordered the round world!"

"I remember," said Eberhard, "that your world turned from east to west! — Have you heard the Wittenberg news?"

Hans Knapp had a huge, great fire. His ale was famous, and so were Frau Knapp's pasties, one of which Gretchen now set upon the table. Gretchen had a warm, sidelong glance, and cheeks and lips like roses. She was not so young as once she had been, and she knew how to like all wandering students and to keep all at arms' length. Now she went about the inn room like a large and cheerful rose. The fire roared in the chimney — entered other patrons of the Golden Eagle. And all were men of the new times — of the times that were growing newer and newer, the old passing faster and faster into the new. A great part of the old resisted, held fiercely back with cries and objurgations. But those who came about the Golden Eagle were of the new, with its virtues and its faults. Hans Knapp, grey-bearded, huge-paunched, merry-eyed, had himself always stepped out with the new. The fire roared in the chimney, the Wittenberg news flew around the room, danced in the corners and in the middle. Arose loud discussion, the friendliness of substantial agreement, the spice of accidental difference. Speculation, jubilation, mounted high and mounted higher — men's arms were over one another's shoulders, eager faces craned, eyes sparkled. The Golden Eagle knew again the roaring blast of hope, excitement, the good, salt taste, the rapid motion of mental adventure. Happy were the five wandering students. . . .

Said Conrad Devilson, "Let us go tell Gabriel Mayr and Thekla!"

The short afternoon was now at mid-stroke. Gabriel Mayr lived in a small, red and brown house set between a wood-carver's and a goldsmith's. Around the house went a ribbon of garden, with currant bushes and cherry trees. Under a cherry tree in summer, in the chimney corner in winter, sat Gabriel Mayr, about him all the books he could buy or borrow. He was poor, but since his fifteenth year he had first purchased knowledge and then purchased bodily food. Now he was eighty.

The Golden Eagle had been growing too heated. The crisp, clean cold without refreshed, cleared heads. Conrad Devilson, Walther von Langen, Eberhard, Albrecht, and Ulrich danced as they moved up the narrow street. Eberhard made-believe to play, viol-wise, upon his staff. They came to the small red and brown house.

"Is this the place?" asked Eberhard. "I used to dream, in Erfurt, of Gabriel Mayr! So much work has he done, in his time, for the new, splendid world!"

Conrad Devilson knocked, 'Hola! Hola! Wandering students!"

The door opened. Thekla Mayr said, "Enter, wandering students!"

She stood, slender, between fair and brown, in a red gown of her own weaving and fashioning. "Welcome, Conrad Devilson! Welcome, Walther von Langen! Welcome to Hauptberg, Albrecht and Ulrich! Welcome —"

"Thekla, this is Eberhard Gerson who made and engraved the pictures for 'The Silver Bridge.' With Ulrich and Albrecht he left Wittenberg yesterday."

"Welcome, Eberhard Gerson!"

She went before them into a room where a fire burned, and in a great chair, in its light, sat Gabriel Mayr. "Father,

here are wandering students! Here are Conrad Devilson and Walther von Langen, and Albrecht and Ulrich and Eberhard Gerson who made the pictures for 'The Silver Bridge!' And they have news from Wittenberg."

Gabriel Mayr roused himself. "Wait, young men. . . . I am old. . . . It takes time to get back into the blowing wind and the moving water." He pressed his hands against his brows, shook himself in the cloak that was wrapped about him. He gathered energy as one blows coals with his breath. The coals glowed, his eyes brightened, he straightened in his chair, back in good measure came the old potency. "Wittenberg! Who comes from Wittenberg! What is Martin Luther doing now?"

"He has taken the Pope's bull in his hands and burned it outside the town gate!"

"Ha-ah! Did he that?" Gabriel Mayr brought his hands together. "Thekla, Thekla! Do you hear a world gate clanging?"

He sat in his great chair, about him the young men, the wandering students. He wore a black cap, and from underneath his white hair streamed and mingled with the long white hair of his beard. His features were bloodless, his eyes sunken, but very bright. He looked a prophet, such an one as, down in Italy, Michael Angelo was painting. His daughter stood with her arm resting upon the back of his chair.

Mayr spoke on: "I knew that the vehemence of his ongoing would become to that young man an urgent dæmon! Now he cannot stop. He is Samson! He will carry away the gates upon his shoulders and the young and strong will pour in upon a decrepit city. . . . It is well! It is written! The city has become drunken and witless. Yet will some

flowers be trodden underfoot and works of art perish. . . . And he is Samson, he is not Socrates. . . . Yet, Thekla, Thekla! We must rejoice! We make a half-step toward freedom!"

Two of the wandering students cried out upon that. "A half-step! Do you not call it more than that, Master Gabriel?"

Mayr raised and regarded his finely shaped, thin, corded, sensitive hands. "Eighty years have I lived. I remember years when it seemed that the snail and the world raced toward freedom, and the snail appeared to win. And I remember years when it seemed that the world began to say, 'We shall not get there unless we move faster!' And now I remember years when the snail seems left behind. And for a long while now we have seemed to move faster and faster. . . . The ice is breaking and thawing in the springtime. . . . Well, I worship before the springtime! But Freedom is a great word and holds all other words. Pour into it all that you know or guess of freedom, and yet it is not full."

Eberhard spoke. "This is a cool and brimming pailful, Master Gabriel! Every pailful makes more of the desert bloom."

As he spoke he was looking at Thekla. She was looking at him. Their eyes were talking — pure and sincere words of fellowship.

"You are right in that, Eberhard Gerson," said the old man. "Every pailful makes more of the desert bloom!"

Thekla spoke. "It has been believed that God was not to be come at save through officers and courtiers. . . . What is here is that it is seen that no other human being stands between a human being and God."

"So," said Gabriel, and "So," echoed the wandering students.

"Each growing straight to God, without running to any man's door for permission. . . . Much is wrapped up," said Thekla, "in that bundle!"

"Aye, truly!"

Thekla stood beside Gabriel's chair. Her hands were young where his were old. The blue veins did not rise, her hands were not worn thin nor corded like his. But they were made like Gabriel's, sensitive and most expressive like Gabriel's. They commanded the eye as did his, they had their own intelligence. Now they were in motion. "All equal," said Thekla . . . "A republic."

"In religion, the schools, art and knowledge!"

"The blowing wind will not bend the Black Forest and leave the Hartz Forest unbowed. Spring will not come to the Hartz Wood and leave the Black Wood bare. Without Pope . . . without Emperor!"

"Come back, Thekla, from far away!"

"Every slave freed —"

"Come back! Come back!"

"Dawn for women — dawn for women!"

Above her moving hands Thekla's face flushed like a rose. "As the Church to all, so have been men to women! . . . The Church might have become just from within, but does not, and the folk break down the gates of the city and take their own! But now, surely, the freeing folk will free on and on! And surely men will become just from within!" She raised her hands. "I shall go about the world as I will, and I shall build my ships and sail therein! . . . And my sister Elsa will come from her nunnery!"

Gabriel Mayr nodded his head. But he sat in his great chair with sinews grown sunken and unbraced. His eyes had lost point, they seemed the eyes of one who contemplates a dream, recurrent but unsubstantial. Yet he nodded his head. . . .

But Walther von Langen said roughly: "I am fond of Thekla, save when she speaks without knowledge!"

"No harvest ripens for man," said Albrecht, "but woman may gather a good windfall in her apron!"

Quoth Ulrich: "When the house is afire the house-father brings out the house-mother no less than himself! — But that does not mean that she then goes about to set up for herself!"

"Women are women, but Thekla has lived beside a thinker of long and bold thoughts. Thekla cannot help herself!" Conrad Devilson lifted one of her long, brown tresses. "Remain fair, Thekla, and all women! Pick up in your apron the windfalls. and welcome! But we own and shake the tree."

Ulrich and Albrecht, Conrad Devilson and Walther von Langen struck hand on hand or feet against the ground. "So it is!" they cried. "So it is!"

Thekla drew the tress of hair from Conrad Devilson's hand. She stood with eyelids drooped, her lips curved in a slight smile.

The old man who seemed to make the clasp of the ring shook his head and sighed. "This matter of Owning is a long story, and events are yet to come. . . . I should like to see Albrecht Dürer try his hand on that. . . . Thekla, give me wine."

Thekla left his side, then returned with a wheaten wafer and a cup of wine. The old man ate and drank. She

mended the fire for him, took away the cup and plate, and, returning, seated herself upon a cushion on the floor by his side. "Martin Luther has burned the Pope's bull. Now will the Pope bid the Emperor to put him under ban. Maybe he will be slain as a heretic, and all persecuted who look to freedom. Maybe he will find friends in high places, and the Emperor will check the Pope. Maybe, with naught to aid but stronger light, he must fight both Emperor and Pope. Maybe, aroused, the people will go with him. Maybe all will see light — all — all!"

Eberhard, who had been silent before now, spoke. "If but many see, then will the wheel go toward the light. . . . I do not think it is more than twilight. . . . And, maiden, I believe not that man owns the tree, nor at any time has been wholly the shaker thereof!"

Thekla turned and looked at him. "I sinned and you sinned, and yet will we sin. . . . But now we know what either wishes, and lo, it is one wish, and wished by one Self!"

Said Conrad Devilson, "What do you two speak about, there by yourselves?"

He and Albrecht and Ulrich and Walther von Langen had risen from settle and stool. "We must fare back to the Golden Eagle! Heinrich and Karl and Johann come in to Hauptberg to-night. . . . Ah ho! Martin Luther has burned the Pope's bull!"

Without the small red and brown house, across the ribbon of brown garden, in the narrow street red-flushed from the red west, three fell to singing, —

"Down goes the old world,
Up comes the new!
Death on a pale horse
Rides down the proud —"

They sang with enthusiasm, but their ardour had youth and geniality. They were wandering students, humanists, not reforming monks.

Eberhard and Conrad Devilson did not sing, but talked. They dropped a little behind the big, fronting voices. Whatever was the one, Eberhard was something more than wandering student — a man beginning to work with a mind-moved hand. He walked now with a lit face. "They live there alone together — the old man and his daughter?"

"Aye. He taught Thekla all he knew, as though she were a boy. It is a mistake to say that women are not teachable! But they must keep knowledge at home when they have got it. . . . He is past earning now. She embroiders arms for the noble upon velvet, silk, and linen, and so earns for both. He has another daughter — Elsa — in a convent twenty miles from here."

The wandering students were singing, —

"Round turns the wheel,
The wheel turns round!
Comes down the lord of all,
The wheel grows an orb—"

Now they were before the Golden Eagle, and out of door and window floated voices of Heinrich, Karl, and Johann.

That was December. In February Charles the Fifth made to be drawn an edict against Luther. The Diet sitting at Worms refused assent. April, and Luther, at Worms, stood in his own defence, spoke with a great, plain eloquence. Eloquence never saved a man against whom set the main current of his time. The main current of his time going with him, Martin Luther rode in a seaworthy

boat. Storms there were, thunder and lightning, tempest and a lashed ocean — but the boat rode. May, and Pope and Emperor threatened that revolt and all who had share therein with fire in this world and in the world hereafter. The revolt made itself a stronger current.

In May, Eberhard Gerson came again to Hauptberg. He slept at the Golden Eagle, and in the bright, exquisite morning sought out the house where dwelled Gabriel Mayr and Thekla. The cherry trees were at late bloom, and the morning breeze shook down the white petals. The house seemed to stand among fountains.

Three times since that first December afternoon had Eberhard opened the gate, come in between the cherry trees.

Gabriel sat in his armchair under the largest tree, beneath his feet a cushion, about his shrunken frame, for all the May weather, a furred cloak, gift of old pupils. His eyes were closed, he was sleeping in the sun. Thekla sat beside him, embroidering upon a scarf arms of the greatest Hauptberg family. When she saw Eberhard she put her finger to her lips. He stood beneath the blooming trees; they gazed each upon the other for a moment, then she rose, put aside the embroidery frame, and, stepping lightly, moved from the sleeping old man. At some distance, among the currant bushes, stood a wooden bench. She moved to this, and Eberhard followed. Here they might mark the sleeper through an opening, but for the rest the green bushes closed them round. The air was full of a subdued, murmurous noise, bees, twittering birds, sounds from the woodcarver's house of the woodcarver's trade.

"Came one yesterday," she said, "who told us that now

they are preaching against monastic vows. He said that what is preached is printed, and that it steals from overhead like the wind into cloisters, that monks and nuns read. . . . Oh, that it might unbar the door for Elsa!"

"You love Elsa so."

"She is younger than me. She is unhappy — Elsa, my sister!"

"How was it, Thekla, that your sister went there?"

Thekla gazed at the tree heads against the blue sky. "Ah, cannot you remember a day when it seemed wisest and fairest to worship so — from a cell? She dreamed that, and being young, she went. Then her inner need travelled its own path, and it was hardly that path. But her body is held there, though her mind has gone forth. All the customs of the place clutch and bind too closely the growing being. . . . She would forth if she could."

"Who may know where all this deep rebellion will stop? Thekla, I see a wider circle."

"Oh, and I! . . . There is no stopping."

Behind the small red and brown house a cock crew. The two listened. "The crowing of a cock. . . . When I hear it from far away," said Eberhard, "it pleases me so! It seems the oldest, oldest sound. . . ."

"He is a beautiful cock. His name is Welcome."

"Welcome . . .?"

"Yes. . . . It is an old, old sound."

The currant bushes almost closed them round. Above the currants showed the snowy cherry trees, and above the cherry trees the high, steep, red roofs of neighbouring houses. Thekla and Eberhard sat very still. "It seems to me," said Eberhard, "that we have known each other the longest time —"

"The longest time. . . . I think that we live always, and only fail to remember."

"Known and loved. . . . What are we going to do now, Thekla?"

She looked at the sky above the trees. "We are going to free ourselves."

"Free ourselves."

"Yes. Free you — free me."

"I am only beginning to earn. I have nothing but what I earn. I have letters telling me of good work to be had at the next Court. I may paint there the Prince's portrait and those of his children. Moreover, he would have drawings of Christ's Parables that in woodcuts may be scattered like seed over the land. . . . But it is far from Hauptberg. . . . I know not when I shall see you again."

She looked at him. In her eyes shone tears, but in her countenance something smiled. "Have we not to learn that everywhere we see each other?"

Gabriel Mayr called her from under the cherry tree.

That year Eberhard the artist did good and true work. He painted the portraits of the Prince and his children, he saw put forth in woodcuts, far and wide, ten great drawings of Christ's Parables.

A year and more, and he came again to the red and brown house between the woodcarver's and the goldsmith's. This time the cherries were ripe, the birds were pecking them. This time Gabriel lay abed, within the house. He spoke to Eberhard standing beside him. "My ship is tugging at her binding ropes. . . . Thekla has something to say to you. It is about Elsa. I approve. I cannot talk any more to-day."

Thekla gave him water and wine. A girl of twelve, an

orphan for whom they made a home, took her place beside the bed. Thekla and Eberhard, moving to the outer room, talked beside the window. "Through the land, here and there and everywhere, monks are coming from their cells. Here and there a nun, stronger than the rest, comes forth. . . . I went to hear Martin Luther speaking in the market-place. 'Ah,' he said, 'Come forth, monk, who seest now that, seeking God, thou mistookest for him an earthly giant! And come forth, nun, and stand side by side with thy brother the monk! Look within, and see the one God, who wills that both be free!'"

"Yes," said Eberhard, "I have heard him preach that."

"I have been to the convent. I have seen Elsa. She would leave her cell and come freely home, to live and work hereafter as need will have it. But she is not where she can say, 'I mistook myself: Let me go at will as I came at will!'"

"No."

"No. And my father is an old, dying man. And we have not strong friends, as strength goes. The changing time is yet so young, and the old time a giant —"

"Wait a little while —"

"So I think. . . . We will be patient, wreathed and twined with patience. . . . When will the all say to the all, 'Freedom!'"

The summer passed, the autumn went, the white-clad winter drove by in her sledge, the days grew longer, the sun more strong, the frogs were heard in their marshes, the willows greened, the birds returned. In that year matters in the world had moved so fast that it seemed that many years must have been bound in the one sheaf.

On a day in May, Eberhard again approached the red and brown house among the cherry trees. Within the gate he saw the snow petals drift down and the bright butterflies and the humming bees. Upon the doorstep sat Thekla. "He is asleep. The ship is almost out of harbour."

Eberhard sat beside her. "I could not sleep, and I rose while it was still grey. I had pencils and my drawing-block, and I fell to a drawing of old Babylon for the Prophets series. . . . Thekla, do you think that we ever lived in old Babylon?"

"Yes, we lived there. . . ."

"So I must think. . . . I drew with the skill I have to-day, but I drew your face in a temple room."

"Where have we not lived? We are all life."

They sat still in the sunshine. The bees hummed, the butterflies glanced, the breeze shook down the cherry snow. A bird arose on glancing wings and flew into the blue. Thekla spoke. "Elsa —"

"Here am I to help you," said Eberhard.

On such and such a day walked Thekla from Hauptberg. The day was passing sweet, the land at mental war, but not at that gross war which made a country road no better for a woman than any hungry jungle. There was no reason why one who was strong and who toiled for a living should not fare afoot from town to outlying hamlet or country house. So Thekla went on, through the bright spring air, and with a hopeful spring in her heart. "Elsa! Elsa! Elsa!" said her heart. Back in the red and brown house lay the old man her father, watched over by the orphan girl and by Gretchen Knapp. He lay peacefully, his ship a noble ship, waiting in a great calm for the loosening that should send him forth upon the ocean. She was at peace

with and about him. . . . The time-spirit was busied with a great rearrangement of particles. She felt that; she believed that the new arranging held great promise; she loved the world and was happy with a vision of an inner new garment, beautiful, desirable as this outer loveliness of spring garments! She had the great happiness of believing that spring was coming to the whole world. "Elsa!" beat her heart. And, "Eberhard — Eberhard — Eberhard!" beat her heart. And "Women — women — women!" beat her heart. And, "All the world — all the world!" beat her heart.

A few miles out of Hauptberg, Eberhard, driving a strong grey farmhorse in a farmcart, turned from a wood track into the highway. No one was near, only distant folk and beasts might be seen upon the road. Thekla climbed to his side, and the steady grey horse drew them on. To those who knew them not they might seem a prospering peasant and his wife.

They drove many miles through the soft, bloomy weather. Here was their present goal — a farmhouse known to Thekla, the place where she stayed when at long, long intervals she came to see Elsa in the Convent of the Vale. From the hill behind the house might be seen the roofs of Elsa's prison. . . . To Elsa it had not always been prison; to many therein it did not now seem prison; to very many in the near past and the far past it had stood as true refuge and haven of safety; to a few its meaning had been high opportunity, fair self-fulfilment. It had had part, and no ignoble part, in the movement of all things. But now to the inner need of many an one, it was grown a manacle for the spirit's wrists, a bandage for the eyes, an unwholesome draught for the lips, a shell and casing

straight and deadening. It stifled the life that once it had served.

The farmhouse where now the two alighted from the cart was one in which Thekla and Elsa had played as children. The grey-headed man who met them in the yard was a kinsman of their mother's, the middle-aged man who would not return till evening from the fields, the middle-aged woman who stood in the door, were of those who presently would be called "Lutheran." Thekla was at home here; they took Eberhard simply, as her helper in a piece of business of which they had knowledge. The grey-headed man showed him where to put the grey horse and the cart; he came presently into a bare, clean room where the women were placing upon a deal table bread and meat and ale. He and Thekla sat down and ate and drank, and in at the open window came all the songs and scents of spring.

The shadows grew long, the sun went down, a full moon rose behind the hills. The frog choir was in the meadows, a nightbird cried from the wood. Thekla and Eberhard were walking through a forest, following a stream that flowed by convent lands. Huge boughs stretched above their heads, the moon came through the forest windows, the clear stream sang. Then they came to a bare hill and mounted it. On the top they paused, and, looking down, saw the Convent of the Vale.

It became deep night. . . . With hearts that trembled, that stood still, that drew courage and met the emergency, two nuns of the Vale stole from cells, through corridors, by many doors, by blank walls. They reached a door seldom used, in a part of the vast building from which the life of the place had withdrawn. There were bars across;

these they withdrew softly, softly. Here was the heavy lock. Elsa had the key, obtained after long, patient planning, obtained with a still daring. She kneeled, inserted the key, — it turned with groaning sound. The two waited, so breathless and unmoving that they seemed figures of wax resting there against wall and door. But the convent slept, or, waking, did not hear. Elsa drew open the door. They went out, they closed it behind them; they made way through the convent garden.

Here was the wall, high, but with huge ivy twists covering it to the top. They found the stoutest of these; — helping each the other, they mounted, they crept across the broad coping, where the ivy was not let to come. They looked over, down into darkness, they made courage their servant, they gripped the edge with both hands, they lowered themselves, they dropped upon the earth beneath. Mother Earth was kind, they took no hurt. . . . There were yet to pass neighbouring low houses of peasants, bound to the soil and convent service. But the night was at its depth and all life seemed charmed to keep its place.

A clear stream slipped through the vale. Upon one side lay the convent land, upon the other the world beyond its dominion. A narrow bridge gave crossing. Elsa and her fellow crossed the stream and were immediately under huge trees. Thekla spoke from where she stood beneath an oak. "Elsa . . ."

Thekla, Eberhard, Elsa and Clara hastened through the night. The old wood stood still about them, they had glimpses of stars like hanging fruit, balm drew its mantle around. They went fast and went far, and ere the cock crew were at that farmhouse. Here was food prepared, and

peasant dresses for Elsa and Clara. In a room in which the dawn was coming, Elsa, this dress upon her, took up the nun's garb, fallen at her feet. She looked at Thekla over it, Thekla looked at her. They were both moved, they had a great tenderness in their faces. "Now we will put it in the fire," said Elsa. "It has meant some terrible things, and it has meant some lovely things, and it will go away in lovely flame, and when I remember the terrible I will also remember the lovely, as is just."

"Yes," said Thekla. "Here is the fire kindled."

Elsa and Clara came out of the house, like peasant women. Behind them Margaret, Hans's wife, made haste to make the house as though none but the usual dwellers had stepped therein, or yesterday or to-day. Without, in the pink dawn light, waited the horse and cart and Eberhard in the carter's seat. And here were Hans and old Fritz and Michael, son of Fritz, with their own cart and cart-horse ready to overtread and confuse within and without the farmyard the marks of the Hauptberg travellers. Thekla, Elsa, and Clara climbed into the cart. Thekla sat beside Eberhard, Elsa and Clara sat upon straw, among baskets, wide peasant hats shading their faces. The light was not yet clear; they were forth upon the highroad, going toward Hauptberg before the growing travel took note of them. And then the travel saw only prosperous peasant-folk going to town to market. And so at last they came to Hauptberg.

Gabriel lay as he had lain when Thekla and Eberhard left him. Gretel the orphan and Gretchen Knapp had cared for him well. The cherry blossoms nodded over the little red and brown house, the bees hummed around it. Elsa stood as in a trance, tasting home. . . . They made

Clara welcome, would hold her until her kin that were of the following of Luther could send for her from their own town.

Presently Hauptberg knew that two nuns had left the Convent of the Vale, and that Gabriel Mayr's daughter Elsa was within the town walls, in the red and brown house with the old dying scholar, with her sister Thekla. Great talk arose in which opinion stood divided. Some cried huge scandal and sacrilege, some held their breath, some cried, Well done! All Germany now was divided into two parties, those two divided into others. The old party, the old Church thundered and threatened, but the new party gathered and came on with the shout of the spring-time flood. The Prince in whose rule stood the town of Hauptberg was friendly to the new. If at first it was doubtful, it was soon seen that, so long as the new withstood and grew upon the old, Elsa who had been nun was safe in Hauptberg, and safe those who had helped her escape.

Martin Luther heard of that happening, and preaching in Wittenberg, cried, "See how, God with them, those two came forth! Be of their company, monk and nun, throughout the land! O ye self-immured, do ye not see that ye cannot wall in God? Man cannot wall God in, and woman cannot wall God in! God — yea, in your bodies! — will walk free!"

Others were breaking monastery and convent — this very year came from the Convent at Eisenach Catherine von Bora and her five sister nuns. . . .

In Hauptberg, in the red and brown house behind the cherry trees, Thekla and Elsa kneeled beside their dying father. Gabriel Mayr was conscious, he had a peaceful and clear going forth. He put his hands upon his daughters'

hands, the hands of the three held together. "Thekla and Elsa. . . . Wider and deeper being for us all —" His hands unclosed, life went out of his body. Thekla and Elsa rose and looked upon the shell beside the ocean.

Summer passed — autumn came, rich and ripe with wheat sheaves and hanging grapes. Thekla and Elsa lived on in the red and brown house and earned for themselves. Then Elsa went to the nearest great city to visit Clara who lived there. Thekla and the young orphan girl kept the house. Eberhard painted a great picture for a guild hall in a town fifty miles away.

Came winter with its grey cloak and its white cloak and on keen, clear nights the tremendous stars. Came again Eberhard. "Thekla, now must we live and work together —"

"Live and work together."

They gathered neighbours and friends, and before these took each the other's hands. "We two love, and we will to live and work together —"

So Eberhard came to the red and brown house. . . .

And all this while the mind of the age moved in revolt, and, like the needle of the compass, customs and institutions trembled toward following the mind. It was the new time, and the new time was yet fluid, and might go between these banks or between those. The flood might contract — the flood might expand. Many fields would be watered, or more or less. Those who cared for certain fields looked anxiously that they be helped. Hearts beat high and hearts sank — there were dreams — there were pangs of hope and of disappointment. Some could say, "The water comes to my fields, the water turns my mill wheel!" and some, "It goes aside, my fields are left unhelped, my wheel stands still!" and some, "For me a

little rill, a broken light, a wheel that is turned a little way!"

At Christmas-tide came again to the Golden Eagle Albrecht and Ulrich, Conrad Devilson and Walther von Langen, older all by four years than in that December when they had brought news of the burning of the Pope's bull. As of yore the Golden Eagle creaked and swung. Within the clean inn room Hans Knapp fed the fire, and the flame leaped up the chimney. Frau Knapp had lost no skill of cookery, and Gretchen Knapp, a little larger, a little rosier, moved about the room and set the pasty on the table and drew the ale. Only two of the incoming four might justly now be named wandering students. One had settled into burgherdom and was in Hauptberg on merchant business. One taught in an university and now had a holiday. The four had met much by accident. But fine and pleasant it was to be together again, at this Golden Eagle! They recalled the last time they had been so together in this town. "We went to Gabriel Mayr's. Eberhard Gerson was with us." — "Now it is Eberhard's small red and brown house — Eberhard's cherry trees and currant bushes!" — "Let us go see Eberhard and Thekla!"

They went somewhat merrily up the narrow street, but they did not sing as they had done. That was because they were older, and two were grown respectable. Moreover, some sweetness and wild flavour— the taste of the first flood — undeniably was gone out of the times.

Here was the red and brown house between the woodcarver's and the goldsmith's. They struck against the door. It opened and Thekla stood before them. "Welcome, and enter, wandering students!"

In the room, ruddy with firelight, Elsa sat and span,

open beside her a book of old poetry. Gretel, the young orphan girl, knitted and played with the cat upon the hearth. Eberhard was gone to look at a book at the University. He would presently be home. Thekla showed the work he was doing — the series of drawings, The Road to the City of God. The wandering students admired, commented, admired again. "The verse in each — the verse that is shown?"

"I write the verse. He makes the picture."

"They fit," said Conrad Devilson, "like two halves of an apple!"

Eberhard opened the door and came in. There was welcoming — good talk of work and of old times and wanderings. Gathered around the fire, they talked of private and public matters. It was a time when the public business is clearly seen to be each soul's business. So they talked of the general storm and stress. Eberhard had news. Martin Luther was coming to Hauptberg and on three successive days would deliver three discourses. And all would go. . . .

Outside the house the wind rattled the boughs, the wind sang in the chimney. Thekla sat in her red gown, in the old chair of Gabriel Mayr. She sat in the middle of the half ring, in front of the bright, leaping fire.

"Fire is a chariot in which rides the past!" said Thekla. "Who first kindled fire and laid it on a hearth?"

"Some hunter," said Conrad Devilson. "He would find a cave and bring lightning from a stricken tree, and build himself a hearth, and lay fire and cook his game and be at home! The early man."

"Ah, much we owe the early man!" said Walther von Langen.

"He is at the base," said Albrecht.

The wind whistled, the bare cherry boughs tapped upon the wall. Thekla left the great chair and the fire and going to the smaller room brought back a dish of red apples and a jug of ale.

A week and Martin Luther came to Hauptberg. All that great moiety of the town that would presently be named "Protestant" flocked and crowded to hear him, who was the most famous man in Germany. On a windy, wintry day, to a great throng, preached Martin Luther. Two hours he preached and touched on many things. Great was his power in preaching, great his power to make and guide opinion, wide the magnetic field in which he moved.

That was the first day. Came the second, and came again the flocking and the thronging. He preached the revolt of thought, and he drew Martin Luther's lines around that revolt, and within the line was blessing and without the line was cursing. One thought of revolt infected another thought with revolt, one question led to other questions. . . . Martin Luther knew not how to help that, but he could preach against the thought with which he did not travel, the question which did not come to him to be asked. . . . He could preach with a great, plain heat and power. He could knock down and render without seeming life a thought or question. If, after a time, it revived, got again to its feet, that doubtless was a trick learned of Satan. . . .

He travelled with religious revolt, but by no means with political, economic, and social revolt — save only as all society, through religious revolt, somewhat changed its hue. He allowed that; where society had been dark of hue it was to become light and bright of hue. He thought that his definition of religion was the whole definition. He carried a great lantern and it sent a bright ray into many

a dark corner. But it was a great lantern and not a sun.

He preached against the seething discontent among the peasants and the artisans. He preached against economic revolt. It was a wide subject, and there were other revolts also that to-day he lacked time thoroughly to destroy. Between two and three hours he preached. He left economic and class revolt breathless, hurt with many a wound, seemingly done to death. And there was yet to-morrow in which to finish these and other serpents who raised their heads from the dust in the tumult of the times. . . .

On the morrow he preached the third time. Hauptberg that would hear Luther thronged together under a grey sky, came through fast-falling snowflakes. They fell so thick, they fell so fast, they were so large and white that the world seemed moving in a veil. Martin Luther preached again upon the revolts outside the line that he drew, and he shook anathemas upon them, and he laid hands upon the Bible before him and he interpreted its words according to his own inner and strong feeling. "Slaves, obey your masters!" he preached. "Render unto Cæsar that which is Cæsar's and unto God that which is God's!" he preached. "The poor ye have always with you!" he preached. He preached of men and women. "Are you made for abstinence? No! You are made, as God says, to increase and multiply! But in marriage, not without. Therefore, let a man early find work and take to wedlock in God's name! A boy at the latest at twenty, a girl at fifteen or eighteen. . . . Let God take care how they and their children are to be supported. God creates children and will certainly support them. . . . If a woman

becomes weary and at last dead from bearing, that mattereth not! Let her only die from bearing, she is there to do it!"

He preached the subjection of woman. "The woman's will, as saith God, shall be subject to the man and he shall be master; which is to say, the woman shall not live according to her free will, as it would have been had Eve not sinned, for then she had ruled equally with Adam, the man, as his colleague! Now, however, that she has sinned and seduced the man, she has lost the governance, and must neither begin nor complete anything without the man! Where he is there must she be, and bend before him as before her master, whom she shall fear, and to whom she shall be subject and obedient!"

He swung his great lantern, and now there was light, and now its light was darkened. But he had huge influence to determine minds that were not self-determined. The sermon was over. . . . Dr. Martin Luther went away with University men; the crowd broke, hung lingering, discoursing upon the discourse, most unevenly divided into yeas and nays. . . . Then home it went, in units, twos, and groups, through the falling snow.

Elsa was again with Clara, in her home in the next city. Thekla and Eberhard came between the bare fruit trees to their door, opened it, and entering heard the orphan girl singing at her work. They put away cap and mantle, hood and mantle; they came to the fire, and, raking up the embers, laid on fresh wood, and brought into the room the brightness of leaping flame. The air grew warm. For all the falling snow without, flowers might have bloomed in here and the greenwood waved. Eberhard's drawing-table stood by the window. The two, moving there, gazed

out upon the snow, then, turning, looked each upon the other. They laughed.

Eberhard bent over the board. "Picture after picture upon the Road to the City of God!"

"Ten thousand, thousand, pictures!"

Bending, they looked at the drawing together, read together the verses lying beside it. "Good is the poem!" said Eberhard.

"And good is the picture!"

"What was it Conrad Devilson said the other day?"

"'They fit like two halves of an apple.' . . . To talk in terms of halves — how strange that must seem in a world where one says, 'Lo, an apple!'"

They laughed again, but then they sighed, looking from the window upon Hauptberg and the falling snow.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE RIGHT OF KINGS

RICHARD OSMUND and his white horse approached Great Meadow. The year was at autumn, the year 1654. A considerable village, Great Meadow spread over the ancient meadow and a short way up the hill. Meadow and hill had for a border a still, complacent river. The hill was crested by an old wood, and along the roadside stood huge, bronzing trees. A mile from town a stream turned a mill wheel. From the tall stone mill might be seen clustering houses with small bright dooryards, and the village green and an ancient church and churchyard.

Richard Osmund rode slowly, a steadfast man in a plain dress of brown. Dress and his short-cut hair, and his uncocked hat, general demeanour as well, marked him for some shade of inhabitant of the Puritan and Parliamentary hemisphere. But within this general part of the globe it was hard to class him. He did not look mere Church Reform, nor yet Presbyterian, nor precisely Independent, not yet Anabaptist nor Leveller. Certainly he must be a dissident of some sort, but of what sort?

He possessed strength and erectness, with a clean accuracy of bodily movement. Perhaps he had been a soldier—Ironside. But even thus he was not wholly classed. There seemed to shine from him a kind of wisdom; he looked a thinker. Perhaps he was a member of that Parliament sitting in London Town, busy with English destinies. Yet even in this time of the Commonwealth, there should

be about him some little pomp and circumstance to mark him so important. There was not. So perhaps he was not important. He seemed about thirty.

It was a still autumn morning, of a vision-like lift and clearness. The white horse went at a walk, Richard Osmund thinking as he rode. He came by the stone mill. The mill stream gave forth a crystal sound, the water flashed over the wheel. A couple of men, two or three boys, busied themselves before the great door.

"Good-day, friends!" said Richard Osmund, passing.

"Good-day," answered the men; then, straightening themselves from the grain sacks, looked at horse and rider more closely. Said the miller, "That one, too, rides a white horse!"

Osmund had passed the door. The miller's helper called after him, "Be Richard Osmund your name?"

The rider turned his head. "Yes, friend! It is my name."

The miller and the miller's helper broke into laughter — not kindly laughter. "Osmund on his white horse!" The laughter had in it a jeer, anger increased in it. The miller was a choleric man. He doubled his fists, he shouted to Osmund: "Throw you in the race! Come here, and I'll throw you in the race!"

The man to whom he cried regarded him and the mill wheel and the mill race with a certain patient whimsicalness. "Flow race — turn wheel — fight with your sins, miller! Not with me who bring them to your mind!"

He rode on, going with the same deliberateness as before. The road bending, the mill was hidden. He was going over a way chequered with light and shade. Overhead rose a great noise of birds. The road mounting slightly; he saw, at a little distance, the village full before him like the

device upon a shield. *Richard Osmund upon his white horse.*

The horse had been his father's. It was old, but strong yet. Richard Osmund had money, just enough to loosen the bonds of farm and of desk and to set him free to go through England from town to town and village to village, to clothe him as he was clothed, to give him plain lodging and plain food. He had not money for another horse, did he wish to change. Loving his old white friend, the thing had not before occurred to him. But it was true that he was sooner known for the horse that he rode. Where there grew hostility the bitter fruit fell oftener upon his head. . . . He might take White Faithful back to the farm, and henceforth walk. That was in his mind as he rode. . . . Halfway between the mill and the town he saw running through the fields the boys who had hung about the mill door. They were making for Great Meadow, and would be there as soon or sooner than he. "*Ho! Coming into town, Richard Osmund*—!"

White Faithful and Osmund plodded on.

He thought that he must have been in Great Meadow as a child, his father and mother coming this way from the north. And after Marston Moor he had ridden through the place, a young soldier in a troop of Ironsides. He had remembered the mill, and now he thought that over all the landscape and the village like the boss of the shield there hung a sense of familiarity. He often had this brooding sense. "Nor is this either strange to me!"

He approached the edge of the village. About him, among trees, stood some poor cottages. He spoke to an old man leaning upon a gate. "I want a lodging for two days or more. There is a tavern here—"

"Aye. Once 't was the King's Own, but now 't is the Green Wreath."

"Tavern charges are too great. But I can pay fairly for myself and my horse."

"Over there, among the willows — Diccon the thatcher may take you."

"Over there" showed a field away from the road. A lane led to it. Down this turned Osmund, riding beneath ancient trees. He crossed a stream, and came to a thatched house, long and low, willow-shaded, and open-doored. Diccon the thatcher was building a shed. Yes, he had a room to hire and a stable for a horse. So much it was.

Osmund, dismounted, drew from pocket the sum named.

"The most pay when they go," said the thatcher.

"I know. But accidents happen. Best take it now, friend!"

"An you will, I will," said the thatcher and took the money. He looked the other over. "The gentry do not often come here. They go to the Green Wreath."

"I am not gentry. Perhaps," said Osmund, "it is right to tell you that I am not popular where I go."

The thatcher gazed still, then he spoke and he seemed to quote some saying that he had heard. "'A simple, proper-looking man riding a white horse.' — Is your name Osmund?"

"Yes. Richard Osmund."

The thatcher, who was a slow, deep man, studied the situation. "If strange doctrines killed men I reckon that England would be a desert to-day! . . . Now, George Fox. I was at Reading, and I heard him witnessing before what he called the steeple-house. When he was done they beat and stoned him and took him away to gaol. . . . But

I did n't taste poison in his words. I thought there was some honey in them."

"So there is. — I will put White Faithful in the stable then."

"It is market day in Great Meadow. There will be a many about."

"It happens sometimes to me as it does to George Fox. If it happens so in Great Meadow, keep White Faithful, until you hear from me. If you hear no more, keep him and use him, treating him well."

They moved together toward the stable and the house. "Great Meadow," said the thatcher, "is hard on new doctrines until somehow it drinks them down — and then it thinks the spring was always on its land! I've seen Great Meadow Bishop and King — and I've seen it Presbytery and Parliament — and now it's Independent and Oliver and the new Commons. But it always cries 'Poison!' at first. . . . Keep your mouth shut till you see which way the creature'll jump! That always seemed wisdom to me until I heard George Fox."

"And then?"

"I'm not so sure," said the thatcher. "Of course if you're marching, and the thirst and heat are bad, and some one knows of a spring of water he ought to tell. . . . But your doctrine, now, is n't religious."

"Is n't it?" asked Osmund. "I wonder. . . . I think that it is religious."

"Scorn and laughter are hard things to bear," said the thatcher. "How did you strike out what you did?"

"The fire was in the flint for who had eyes to see," said Osmund. "Also I was born of a woman."

Within the house Margery the thatcher's wife put bread

and ale upon a table. Osmund sat down and ate and drank. When he had done this he took a book from his pocket and began to read. That was for rest after deep pondering, and to steady nerve and brain before he should rise and walk forth, deep into Great Meadow. A small, latticed window gave upon a small garden and a climbing hill. In the garden were sprinkled, as by a giant's hand, clumps of red and gold and blue, gillyflower and larkspur and marigold. A woman, passing the window, looked for a moment into the room, then presently entered at the door. She crossed to a stair and mounting this disappeared. Osmund looked up from his book. She was a young woman, of a darkness mixed with rose. Almost immediately she was in the room again, upon her head the wide straw hat of the country women. She crossed to the door, vanished into the world without.

Osmund, falling to his book again, read a little farther in its pages, then marked the place and shut the volume. He sat on in the clean, still room, elbows resting upon the table, his forehead in his hands. He sat very quiet, collecting the inner forces. At last he rose, and left the room and the cottage. He found the thatcher yet busy with the shed. "Are you going now into Great Meadow? That is my cousin going ahead of you there. Wait till she is gone. I said naught to her about you."

Osmund leaned against the shed and looked at a bird soaring above the stream and the trees. The thatcher spoke on. "As I said, there'll be a many about in the town to-day — well-off and poor and old and young. And market days are n't always the most peaceable! You know your own business best, but Great Meadow'll be a quieter place to-morrow."

"But not so many people together. If you've a message," said Osmund, "that you want to give to the whole country —"

The thatcher took hold of a beam to lift it into place. Osmund helping him, together they raised and set it, then stood back to breathe. "Well, yours is the strangest message!" said the thatcher. "I'm coming into town myself after a little. I've heard George Fox. As I look at it, a man can afford to hear more than ordinarily he does hear."

"I think that he can," said Osmund.

The woman had disappeared from the lane going to Great Meadow. Richard Osmund, crossing the stream, took the same narrow way, bronzed by autumn, with the birds flying up from the hedges, up and afar into the deep, blue heaven.

Short was the distance into Great Meadow. It seemed that every one was out of doors; he heard the market clack and hum. Persons passed him and he passed persons, men and women and children. Some did not notice him; others spoke or not as the mood was in them. It was not until he had come in sight of the market stalls and the village green that any recognized him. Then came tilt against him one of the boys who had been at the mill and had run through the fields. The boy looked, then turned and ran crying to a knot of young men at a corner: "Here he is now! Here he is now!" Richard Osmund passed by to loud laughter and hard words.

The Green Wreath had about it numbers of villagers and country folk. Drovers and farmers were in town. The tavern, the church, the market booths all gave upon the green. The day was at noon, the sun strong, the air full of sound. In the circle of Great Meadow were a thou-

sand people and more. . . . All over England stood such hives of people. . . . To place within these hives an idea new to them, to leave it there to live and work, or to seem to die, smothered and trodden underfoot, to seem to die and yet to work on. . . . Ways to place ideas. The writing way, the book way, was one. And Richard Osmund's book might serve the idea, and he hoped as much from it. To speak out in England to-day was the other way that he could see, and, seeing, took.

Broad, rounded steps led from the green to the churchyard gate. Here was goodly space for standing, and many a speaker to Great Meadow had stood here. Now Osmund stood. "Folk of Great Meadow —"

Buyers and sellers, men and women, left the market. The men left the Green Wreath. There came together a mob, increasing from every side. In part it was curious and wished to hear, in part it was angry and wished but to loose its own passion. Here and there in the mass might stand a forward-looking soul, interested rather than curious, not inclined to mere fury against the new. But these were few set over against the many.

Osmund stood, a resolute man, striving to cause an inner light to shine outward. He looked at the throng pressing around, close to the steps. He saw that it made a black and heavy cloud that might turn to a storm that should beat him down. By now he could well gauge these crowds that would listen so long as it pleased them to do so, and then would lift the arm of a phrenetic. Yet always, even in the midst of the darkest cloud, he could see, like stars in narrow rifts, listening faces, kindred eyes. But this was a heavy cloud and would surely break in storm.

He opened his lips. "I have a call to speak to the people

of England! — England, England, thou hast heard many calling to thee, and sometimes thou harkenest, and sometimes thou turnest upon thy side. 'Let me alone! A little more slumber and a little more sleep!' And sometimes thou stainest thyself purple with the blood of those who cry!"

In the crowd was a score of mere barbarians. These began at once to shout against him. "Richard Osmund! Pull him down! Have away with him!" Others withstood these. "Wait till he speaks! We want to hear —" The crowd worked and seethed. The sun beat down upon flushed faces.

"Great Meadow, hearken! What is our English word to-day? Liberty! Then I speak to you of Liberty. What have we done? We have said to the Bishops, 'God in us the ruler in his own matters — not you!' We have said to the House of Lords, 'You have thought that you were born to rule over us — but you were not!' We have said to the King, 'Only in the divine is there divine right!' And the Bishops rule no more, nor the Lords, and the King has suffered death. Now is the New Commons sitting in London! "

His words made way against all difficulties. "Aye, aye!" cried the crowd, arrested. "We in England rule ourselves! We and Oliver rule ourselves!"

Osmund laughed, standing on the churchyard steps. His laughter was not bitter, but clear and large. "So we say. 'Lo,' we say, 'England is free!' Freer than we were — that is sooth! But not free. No more so than is the prisoner who has broken one ward when there are twenty yet to break. Yet is that prisoner freer by just that broken ward, and stronger to work on by the new hope that is in him! Let him take courage and break ward after ward!"

"What ward, now? Now, what ward? Now shall we have Osmund's doctrine!"

"Break ward after ward! Said Christ Jesus, 'Put not new wine into old bottles, nor new cloth upon the old garment.' — O English folk, let us deepen and widen and heighten freedom until there stands the new vessel for the new wine, and for the patched the whole, fair, shining garment! Nowhere yet — no, not by many a ward — full freedom, full escape! Not in England, not upon earth. Freedom in part — light in part! Your task and mine never to rest until the whole is come and the part melts within it!"

"Osmund's doctrine! 'Let women rule, too!' He always begins something like this, and then he ends, 'Let women rule, too!'"

"Be sure he leads a lewd life!"

The more violent sort broke forth again. "Pull him down! Have away with him! In Warwick it was gaol for him, and in Coventry cart tail and pillory! Heinousness! Heinousness and blasphemy!" Clamour arose and a movement from within the throng toward the steps and Osmund upon them. Then appeared the Great Meadow constable and his men. "Order — order here, in the name of the Commonwealth!"

Osmund cried on. "Men are not free to-day, and women are less free! Were women as free to-day as are men, still would men and women have many a thousand wards to break, as many well-nigh as the sands of the sea! We use the word 'freedom,' but we are to *be* freedom! So I do not end, Great Meadow, with 'Let women rule, too!' But in this hour I preach, 'What freedom there is, let us share and share alike! What freedom there is, let it be for

women as for men! What freedom there is, let it run healthily through the whole body!'"

"He is a Friend! He is a Quaker! He and George Fox are birds of a feather!"

Osmund's voice rose above the uproar. "What, shall not a woman learn, and if she will, teach? What, shall we give only to men the good fruit, learning? Shall we build schools, uphold universities, for men only? And what, Great Meadow! If a woman having sought and found God, wishes to speak and teach of her travel thither, of the ocean and the ship across and the haven and the new world, shall she not have freedom to do so? A man, having made that voyage and knowing the priceless-ness of that land, displayeth his charts and persuadeth others to become travellers! Shall not woman, voyager and pilgrim as is man, have here man's liberty? So cry George Fox and the people called Friends and they are right!"

"Ha, ha!" cried the rougher folk. "He looks like a man, but mayhap he is a woman! A woman preaching!" A hand went down to earth, picked up a stone and flung it. It missed Osmund, struck the church gate. There arose gross laughter.

"We have overthrown the King and the Lords. They may come again, because they are not out of our nature. But now we say that they are overthrown! And we say that the Commons of England are to be supreme. We say, 'They govern because we choose them, and if they govern not aright, we may take them back!' We say, 'They are ourselves, sitting there; we have chosen them ourselves from ourselves.' . . . But all are men, chosen by men. O England, there should be women there no less than

men! Women and men should be there, chosen by women and men!"

The more hostile element uttered a kind of roar. A second stone was thrown. The constable and his men consulted among themselves if they should at once arrest Osmund.

"The King! — What use to kill one king, when, as many men as are in England, so many kings! Kings over children — but children grow up and pass from under! But kings over women — from the woman child to the woman, white-haired in her coffin! Generation after generation, thousand years after thousand, sometimes kindly and sometimes not, and always unjust! Foolishness when we cry, 'We will have no king!' then, going home, stamp foot upon the threshold, crying, 'Here am I king!' Mockery when we cry, 'The land is without kings!' and lo, the law gives everywhere the woman to the man, saying, 'Here is the king!'"

Rose a voice. "It is enough! He is speaking against law and good manners! In the name of the Commonwealth!"

"We have sinned. We the men, and we the women, we the one —"

The constable's hand fell upon Osmund's arm. . . . "Making a disturbance and stirring up sedition! Come away you to Justice Thorne . . ."

He and his men came about Osmund, pushed him from the steps. Ere he went, he saw suddenly, in a great rift of the angry cloud, the woman, darkness mixed with rose, of the thatcher's cottage. Her lips were parted, her brows drawn inward and upward, and many a thing was written upon her face.

At the foot of the steps he lost sight of her. Here the

violent among the crowd would have taken hold of him. But the constable was a huge, brawny fellow, and he and his helpers beat off the throng. "Let him alone! Let him to Justice Thorne! He ain't a friend to such, now is he?"

Justice Thorne lived in the town, in a stone house where the street mounted the hill. Here went Richard Osmund, about him the staves of the constable and his men. Behind came a part of that black cloud, and it laughed and jeered and cried hard names. The way was not long. Here was the house, and the justice's parlour and the justice — an old, shrivelled man with a hawk nose and cold, dim eyes.

And Richard Osmund was a disturber of the peace, a pestilent, notorious fellow, a railer against law and good manners. Justice Thorne made short work. "Thou fool and rogue! Thou shalt stand three hours in pillory! Then shalt thou be flung out of town, and if thou comest this way again, thou shalt find yet worse fare! — Take him away, constable, and let me to my dinner and my book!"

Down again to the heart of Great Meadow went law and prisoner and the attending, triumphing rabble. So Richard Osmund was set in the pillory.

Three hours he stood there while Great Meadow turned to its business of that market day. At first boys pelted him with clods, but they tired after a time and rested from that. Persons passed him continually. Some paused to bestow ridicule and abuse, some stared without speaking, some passed, with turned or lowered heads. And still the day shone high and still and clear, with a sky of even sapphire.

Diccon the thatcher came by. He looked around and found it safe to speak. "I knew 't would happen so!

Thunder in thunder clouds, and danger in telling people what they don't want to know! It's George Fox over again! — When you're put out of Great Meadow, will you be going on to Greenfield?"

"Yes."

"There's an old grange with a tower two miles this side Greenfield. Friendly people live in it. I'll get your white horse there to-night."

"Thank you heartily, friend!"

"I'm going home now. . . . A strange thing I notice," pursued the thatcher, "and that is that men like George Fox and you are n't cast down. To have light and food where there is no light and food, and still to stand, though men have cast you down — that, it seems to me, is a marvellous and a darling thing!"

Nodding his head, he went on by, going toward his cottage east of town.

Osmund stood patiently in the pillory in the middle of Great Meadow. In the year and more of this travelling up and down in England he had not infrequently tasted treatment in this like. Sometimes it had been better, sometimes worse. He was glad that this time it was not imprisonment. The festering gaols were the worst things. At no time was there sense in flinching or being melancholy. So he put off shuddering of flesh and dismalness of mind. Pinioned there he was not unhappy. In Great Meadow, even, he had in part said his say. It might live, that seed, bearing fruit when he was dead and gone. A day would come when many more than he would see that freedom and follow it simply. Just as there were many freedoms that Richard Osmund could not yet see, but would one day see. . . . His spirit stood light and steady. He

had much to think of, much to remember, he had faith, hope, and charity, he had vision.

The first hour went by, the second was not far from being gone. The spectacle was become trite to Great Meadow. The chaffering, the buying and selling, had long been resumed. Only now and then came a wave toward the pillory. One or two or more persons might linger about, staring, silent or abusive, but compared with the first half-hour there was solitude. Osmund stood as though he were chained to a desert rock. Houses, booths, the square church tower dissolved in light. There rolled a golden desert, there quivered tops of palm trees.

Came by the thatcher's cousin, the woman of a darkness mixed with rose. Most women passed the pillory quickly, with heads turned aside or down bent. This woman stood still, her hands straight by her sides, her head lifted. Her eyes gazed into Osmund's eyes. Then came between a drift of idle folk. When he could see beyond them, she had vanished. There rolled the golden desert, there waved the fronds of palm.

The second hour was over, the third hour fast waning. It ebbed, it went away with a ringing of church bells. Here now were the constable and his helpers. As the church bells clanged, great part of Great Meadow turned from market and other business to see Richard Osmund put out of town.

Great Meadow was not so great that it was far to its outermost confine. Many hands upon him, with gibes and abusive laughter, Osmund was thrust by the green, by the chief street, toward the town edge. It was the rim opposite the rim through which he had entered. He had been deep into Great Meadow; that which he taught had perhaps

traced a path, a faint guiding line, making easier the next treading. Men could push out that which they called Richard Osmund, but to push out what mind has brought into mind — that is a different thing! They thrust along Osmund's body. Here was the edge of Great Meadow and beyond these last houses a barren, uneven field with a ragged copse by a thread of a stream, and across all went the westward stretching high road.

And here too was a black cloud with harm in its bosom. A part of this throng had come along with constable and prisoner, and a part had dropped employment merely to see what was to be seen, streaming out, men and women, from the various ways and lanes, and a part, when the hour struck, had hurried out ahead into the wild field that mounted here to the hill and descended there to the river. And this last group had furnished itself with sticks and stones. The constable loosened his hold of Osmund. "Now you're out of Great Meadow bounds! My duty by you is done. Trudge!"

The constable turned his back. As if to get the law out of the way, he drew off with his helpers. Osmund shook himself, took breath, and made to step soberly forward upon the onward going road. He saw the dark third of Great Meadow with its sticks and stones and knew that the law did not mean at once or soon to interfere.

The sun stood low in the west. A faint red light lay like a veil over earth. That part of Great Meadow gathered here without great malice, or without malice at all, hung a moment, then began to dissolve into the village. Arose an uncertain murmur with, more loudly, voices and counter-voices. A young man, too often at the Green Wreath, lifting a ragged staff, struck Osmund. An older

man behind him cried with a bull voice: "Who says woman is equal with man denies Scripture! Among men and women only witches and wizards have equal learning and power! Be sure he is a wizard and leads a lewd and fearful life!" With that the storm broke. The hesitants, men and a few women, stiffened, stayed to see what would do the dark core of the mob.

Out of this fringe of spectators came a woman. She did not come slowly, she came swiftly. Osmund, beaten by stave and fist to his knee, found her beside him, the woman of the thatcher's cottage. . . . Around and around, suddenly again, stretched wide space, wide, clear and golden. Above and below time changed into eternity. Form, frame and tissue seemed to move, expand. It was as if two released spirits met in a larger world. . . . Then, with a thunder clap, here was the close to-day and a hand's-breadth of English field.

He rose beside her. "Ah, the great cowards!" she cried. "Ah, the wrong for so long that the wish for the right must be reborn! Ah, men! And ah, you women who are here! Ah, you women, you greater cowards! Ah, women, women! you and I — cowards, cowards! — But now will I turn on Fear!"

The crowd raised its voice against her. "Who is it? — It is Miriam Donne, Diccon the thatcher's gypsy cousin!"

Her look, her raised arm held them. "What will you do to this man? Why do you beat him down? Because he cries to you, 'Slaver, cease to enslave!' You men, I cry the same! And you women, unstirring — watching harm done and unstirring! Never were souls enslaved, but those souls enslaved themselves —"

Great Meadow, out there upon the edge of Great Mea-

dow, burst into a roar: "A lewd man and a lewd woman! A wizard and a witch!" But one of the women — there were not many women — cried shame upon the mob, and to let the two alone, and to let them go. But the mob began to throw stones and to lash itself into a more reckless rage. A woman lifted a shrill voice: "She is a strange woman — a witch! None of us could make her out! She came to Great Meadow just a week ago. Be sure they have been together!" A man midway the crowd cried, "Fornicators!" Voices rushed together into a roar, "Fornicators! Wizard! Witch!" Led by the young man who had been too often to the Green Wreath the wave broke in fury upon Osmund and Miriam.

The constable, quite within the town bounds, but with his head over his shoulder, found that he must return with his helpers. He threatened sending for Justice Thorne. . . . When it would, the rabble desisted. It did not want to kill, it only wanted to make life sore and afraid. It thought that it must have accomplished that.

The sun was beginning to go down, the air growing darker and cooler. The day and all its adventures was over. . . . Let them go!

The village mob, more silent than it had been, began to withdraw into Great Meadow. Its lust for fighting with hands against an idea was glutted; it thought that the idea was dead. The crowd drifted fast away. Amber light was upon the ragged field and the westward-flowing road.

The man and woman, who had been sore beaten, rose from earth to their knees, to their feet. Torn and bruised, stained with dust and blood, they leaned against a trampled bank, they drew breath, with their hands they pressed the mist from their eyes. The red sun was half down, the copse

by the stream was shaking and sighing. "If you can walk, you had better be gone!" advised the constable. Ten miles to Greenfield!" He looked aslant at the dark woman. "Diccon the thatcher used to be in good repute enough, but 't is n't so now! He's took to going to Foxite meetings. If you'd win to his house again, you'd better go by the field and the water and the backside o' town. But I don't mind telling you that it's my belief that trouble for you in Great Meadow is just begun!"

Miriam Donne drew her loosened long hair over her shoulder and began to braid it with swift fingers. Her eyes and Osmund's met in a long look. "Richard Osmund and I will walk together. Here we will find life and here we will find death, here we will find grace and here we will find bitter herbs, for that is the way the world is strewn! . . . But, Master Constable, I would have you wit that my Cousin Diccon knows little of me and my ways, seeing that I came to his house but a week ago. Do not touch him for ways of mine. And now, farewell, Great Meadow!"

She stood straight, her hair braided, her eyes clear. Osmund put out his hand. She laid hers in it. They moved across the trampled place; as the red sun vanished, they took the high road. Behind them a lingering edge of Great Meadow shouted and gibed. A stone that was flung went by, stirring the dust before them. They walked on, following the sun.

The road crossed the stream. When they had gone over the bridge, the copse and the twilight somewhat hid from them Great Meadow. Sound died away, the village left the circle of consciousness. A plain lay before them pierced by the road going toward the yet lighted sky. The evening wind breathed around them, the rich dusk

gained, the evening star shone out. . . . Desert spaces — far clumps of trees like palm trees.

They moved slowly, for they had been savagely beaten. But the interior sphere knew bliss. "Where shall we go — what shall we do — we who never met before to-day and have met thousands of times before to-day?"

"Myriads of times. So blessedly true it is that we are one!"

"So blessedly true!"

"Near Greenfield, in the country, live a family of the people called Friends. Let us go there first."

They moved across the plain. The stars were all lighted. Theirs were the worlds beneath, around, above and within.

CHAPTER XIX

JEAN AND ESPÉRANCE

MUCH of the city must have slept at night. But so much of it waked, so much of it roamed the streets, pressed with business, or watching and hearkening to others pressed with business, so much of it, all night through, burned candles in rooms great and small, so much of it talked, harangued and chanted that a visitor, suddenly in presence from afar, might have asked, "Have you conquered sleep?" Presumably children and the very old slept. Most others seemed in the streets or in the lighted rooms, or upon the floors or in the galleries of the red-capped, and tri-coloured, the haranguing, the fierce and red-hot, the immensely Patriot, the double-distilled revolutionary clubs. The city was fevered, fevered! Voices never stopped, footfalls never stopped, small surging, rushing sound of many patriot feet together never stopped. Lights never went out. At the deadest hour, when the night side of earth has almost forgotten the sun, yet rose in the streets voices of proclamation, yet some speaker found a group to address, yet somewhere beat a drum, yet somewhere, gusts of wind in leaves, Paris whirled in *Ronde patriotique*, later to be called *Carmagnole*.

Jacobins' Club. They sat, they stood, they harangued, they applauded, they dissented, they stayed late in the Club of the Jacobins. At times they stayed all night, gods denouncing the old Titans. The gods, an unnamed Titan in their own element, had all the nave of the Jacobins'

church. Up from pavement to hollow roof, tier on tier, climbed the benches, narrow stairs and galleries giving access. Thus was made circle above circle for patriot Paris, for patriot provinces come up to Paris, for forward-looking, revolutionary-minded units drawn to Paris from the elsewhere world, come to observe France and Paris and the cradle turnings of a mighty Change. Circle above circle sat full, even crowded. The topmost circle, putting up its hand, might touch the groined roof. The lowermost circle, shuffling feet on pavement, must look up a little to the platform and the seated officers of the Society.

The platform was built against a pyramidal, tall shape of black marble, a sepulchral monument left in the Church of the Jacobins. Back of officers were ranged, each in white plaster, each on his pedestal, busts of Patriots whom men must honour. Here were Mirabeau, American Franklin, and others. The lower throng of the amphitheatre faced these and the platform. But midway from floor to roof the circles drew level with the tribune. The tribune was built high, built very high, and midmost of the nave. A light stair climbed to it. Up here, as from a Simeon's Pillar, as from a fount, hill-top high, came the voices addressing the Jacobins' Society, Paris, France, Europe, and America, Mankind, Reason, and Unreason.

The autumn it was of 1791. In the Tuileries, guarded by red Swiss, still waked or slept as the case might be, a King and his family. The old Constituent Assembly had passed away; a new Assembly was beginning what work it might do. In the prisons waked or slept Suspects, but the prisons were not filled as they would come to be filled. Hope of a world that must change, changing temperately — it was still possible to indulge that hope! Even in

nightly meetings of the Society of the Jacobins it might be indulged. The gods had not yet loosed the mad god. They were going to war to the end with the Titans, but there seemed room for hope that these might be vanquished without calling in the ghastly allies, the monsters of the gods' own deeps. There was room for pure natures to believe that. Why should victory be a Pyrrhic victory?

The Club of the Jacobins on an autumn night, and a fever of thought, crescent thought and senescent thought; concepts, rulers to come, hardly out of swaddling bands, and concepts tottering, failing, old men fiercely loth to come to the grave. Thought in a fever, and emotion a boiling deep. . . .

The circles, red-capped, glowed like poppy beds. But the poppies stood not for sleep, nor for languorous "let the world go daffing by!" Noise ran and leaped through all the circles, fierce outbursts of "Yes!" and "No!" — fierce, exultant laughter, fierce muttering and growling of dissent. At times the myriad-brained produced from the heights of itself clearness, intelligence, and nobility. These were halcyon times, clear intelligence in the tribune, clear intelligence in the circles! The next hour, intelligence might weaken and doze away, and all the past rise in murk and storm.

From the tribune many and many had spoken, tongues eloquent and tongues stumbling, heavy-laden, minds of varying scope. Darkness and cold had spoken, and darkness and heat. Glowing heat had often spoken. Now and then light spoke. Hunger spoke, hunger of the body, hunger of the mind, hunger of the spirit, hunger and longing and all in varying degrees.

The night was September. Above Paris the cauldron

hung a tranquil sky, a great full moon. The cauldron boiled and bubbled, it sent forth restless particles, rising steam-mist, colours, blue and green and wine-red, scintillating. Where rose the ancient Church of the Jacobins, where debated the Revolutionary Society, called of the Jacobins, the cauldron boiled intensest.

The circles swept crowded from pavement to roof with patriots, *citoyens*, *citoyennes*, Parisians, provincials, citizens of elsewhere in the world, dreamers, hopers, and builders, sometimes with clouds, dwellers in Idea-land. Back of the platform, of the gleaming busts of Patriots, flags were draped. There were old Ideas made visible! Why should not other and greater Ideas get their incarnation?

Upon the president's platform, beside the president and lesser officers of the Jacobins' Society, sat, tricolour-cockaded, three or four who might speak this night, mounting the tribune high-raised between pavement and dome. One speaker was there now, a bulky Patriot, dark-visaged, black-headed, with a great voice that boomed and reverberated in the nave of the Jacobins. And he was a favourite, and the circles applauded. Passionate he waxed, sublime upon the Rights of Man!

At last he made an end, though still he spoke, coming down the stair, and while he made his way across the crowded pavement. The Jacobins applauded like a roaring wind, up and down the poppies shook!

The president rang his bell. He was speaking of the next speaker — a Patriot from the South. The Patriot from the South, nimble and dark, climbed the tribune stair and from the space atop saluted every quarter of the Jacobins, then fell to speaking, fierily and well. He had

for subject kings in their palaces, aristocrats entrenched, and National Assemblies too fondly dandling the past. The Jacobins roared assent, by acclamation gave him more than his set time. When he was done the circles were like a red sea in storm.

The president rang his bell thrice. . . . Here in the tribune stood an Englishman, slow but weighty, member of the London Corresponding Society, friend of Revolutions. He spoke of Independence, of the Power of the Mind, of the decaying foundations of Oppressions, of fair play and equal way, of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, lastly of the call to action very fully provided by this moment in the World-Epic. . . . The Jacobins applauded because they felt friendly toward English friends of Liberty, and because, indeed, many sat there who could listen absorbed to speech of abstractions. The Englishman ended, went with his cool deliberateness back to the platform. The president's bell rang. . . .

In the circles were very many women; in all Paris and France women were afoot while men rode. Women as spectators, as consolers, encouragers, applauders, inciters, women as mænad participants, priestesses of the marching god, furies when there was need for furies — France and Paris understood these! In the circles sat *citoyennes* enough. Often enough, passionate and fluent enough, *citoyennes* sprang to their feet and harangued, urging bread for their young, freedom *du peuple*, bread — bread! Women, to-night, had place in all the circles, the higher, the midmost and the lower, — attendants' place, sympathizers', encouragers' place, under due orders, participants' place. . . .

Upon the platform, on the bench behind the president, sat, with those who had earlier spoken, a man and a

woman. Behind them gleamed the flags and the Patriots' busts and the great monument of black marble. The man and woman seemed about of an age, just this side perhaps of thirty-five. They were well-made, fair to look upon, light and strong, dressed, needfully, with simplicity, but here, where that was not required, with a clean simplicity. They sat looking into the hollow of the Jacobins, into the resounding shell.

The president's bell rang. Standing, he was speaking of these two whom he himself had brought here to-night, of Jean and Espérance Merlin. It seemed that they had come from Brittany, from the sea, drawn to Paris, as others were drawn, because it announced itself soil for the sowing of Ideas. It seemed that Jean Merlin was a teacher who taught in a way that was not usual — a way that he and his wife had worked out together — Espérance Merlin no less than Jean. It seemed also that they were good, if quiet, lovers of France and that they had long and heroically relieved misery in their town by the sea. It seemed that once they had done the speaker a kindness — a kindness that he had never forgotten. If their ideas should ring strange to some . . . Still, in that beautiful future that all might plainly see, many ideas that once rang strange . . . "*Citoyens, citoyennes*, the Society of the Jacobins is hospitable to Ideas! They come to us upon the clouds, from east and west and north and south. And some we will take to heart and some we will not, but we will give to all a hearing. We shall not be afraid of strangeness. . . . Jean and Espérance Merlin!"

Speakers to-night to the Jacobins had each but short time. When the tribune was done, the floor, the galleries, the circles must speak. Now the red caps moved about,

the voices strongly murmured like a turbulent sea. Then the sea settled to hear Jean and Espérance Merlin.

The two mounted together the tribune stair. The man stood first in the speaker's place, the woman sat down upon the topmost stair, awaiting her turn. A few in the hall of the Jacobins knew them, or knew of them, of what they did and thought in their country by the sea. These applauded. Jean Merlin began to speak.

Presently he motioned to the seated woman. She rose and stood beside him. She spoke, he resting from speech. Her voice was a deep bell, carrying through the Jacobins' amphitheatre. She spoke of the Freeing of Women. The sweet and deep bell sound of her voice ceased; she stood silent while the man took the word. Again, the Freeing of Women. Freedom of Man and Freedom of Woman. The two speakers had simplicity, largeness, and strength; they had holding power. Deep and wide by now was their wisdom-garden, and beautiful, at times, the light that played there.

What they had come to say was said. They quitted the tribune, descended the tribune stair. In the hall of the Jacobins those travellers abreast with them, or close behind them, gave them applauding recognition. But very many disagreed, and some gave fierce expression to that disagreement. The two reached the floor, stood there among the throng. The president's bell rang and rang again. . . . Here was a Patriot, urging from the tribune Fêtes and Demonstrations. The poppy circles were giving ear. On went the night in the Society of the Jacobins.

Continuously persons entered or quitted the amphitheatre. The coming and going received no especial attention. On went the voices, the emotional heat, rapturous

agreements, sudden and violent disagreements. . . . Jean and Espérance Merlin rose at last from a bench in the shadow of that monument of black marble and, unobserved by most, went out of the Church of the Jacobins. Near the door stood together a woman and a man. As Espérance approached, the woman stepped forward; she put out her hand and touched the hand of Espérance. "I a man Englishwoman," she said. "Mary Wollstonecraft. I cry 'yea' to what you said!"

Forth from the Society of the Jacobins, in the street, the two looked up to the heavens and the round moon. After heat and noise within here seemed infinite stillness and balm. The next moment the fevered heart beats, the fevered breathing of the city made themselves felt; the outward stillness and balm were gone. The fancy of each turned to their house by the sea, the cliffs and the sand and the sea and the world behind the sea. "Shall we go back soon?"

"Shall we? . . . This sea also calls for sailors."

They had rented a clean, topmost floor in a house by the Seine. Now they made their way thither through the unsolitary, the still sounding streets. Up many steps they climbed, past doors of other occupants of the house. They unlocked and went in at their own door. Only the roof stood now between them and the sky of night. Moreover, there stretched a lower and jutting bit of roof, parapetted, and reached by a door opening from one of their two rooms. They lighted a candle; seated at a clean, bare table they ate a little bread, drank a little wine, then, rising, put out the candle and stepped from that other door out upon the guarded bit of roof. Here they had placed a bench. Now they sat down upon this, their arms upon the para-

pet, above and around them the splendour of the night. They were up so high that the sound of the streets came muted, coalesced, like an ever running, even running stream. For a time they kept silence, then they talked, though with silences between their words.

"Put what will come on the top of the moment away. . . . The moonlight . . . and thou and I."

"Thou and I."

"The long, the terrible, entrancing, ugly, and beautiful past!"

"And now all welcome. Rich ground for the fruit tree!"

"The without comes within . . . and is made lovely."

"And makes in time a without lovelier than the first. . . . And it goes on. . . . To dwell in the wondrous centre!"

They sat quiet. The sunlight poured upon the moon, the foam and spray back springing gave light to night-time earth. "Thou and I. . . . It is a night for memory!"

"I hear a voice singing in the street. Do you remember —"

" . . . Fiery death. . . . Do you remember a Greek town?"

"Yes, painfully. . . . Oh, the much that I remember!"

"The detail sunken, but the touch and the taste and the odour still. When we wronged each the other —"

"Long past that — long past!"

"And when we loved and helped each the other — and the amount and the bliss of that grows!"

"The old wronging was in ignorance."

"In ignorance."

The moon shone, the night wind breathed, the murmur of the streets lessened as the night grew old. The two went in from the roof, lay soon in deep sleep. In the

morning they waked, then dressed and breakfasted, then stepped again upon the parapetted bit of roof. Paris lay in an early, a rosy light. They stood and gazed, and they saw round and round beyond Paris. Presently, leaving the roof and the two high-built rooms, they went down into the streets.

Autumn waned and with it hope of temperate change. Change was no less needed, no less inevitable, but change, it was seen, still wore a red garment. The time for her white garments delayed, delayed. Still blood-red. . . .

Winter waxed and waned; spring was here and summer, summer of France. Here in the human heart of France was winter, and here it was torrid heat. September breathed over the land, but here in the heart of France the winter deepened, and here the heat encreased, encreased. Flame and murk in this heart of France, and the angel Alteration, red without as a demon. . . .

Jean and Espérance Merlin did not go back to the house by the sea. It held them — Paris. Even in this to-day of the world children must have schooling. The two from the sea made a school in the storey beneath the storey of the two rooms and the parapetted roof. Here, each forenoon, they taught children of Paris, ten in all. They taught after the method the two had worked out, long years by the sea. Here as there it answered, making happy children, learning happily.

That half of the day gone, the children gone, the two in the rooms up under the roof ate their frugal, wholesome meal, rested, then when the sun was in the western quarter, went down into Paris.

They never mistook that there was an angel underneath the red demon garb. They had been far in the world. . . .

But in the autumn of 1792 Alteration stood fearful to look upon. Strongly, strongly was the angel imprisoned and straitened in the demon.

In August the prisons were choked. In September Paris grew blood-red.

Still Jean and Espérance Merlin kept their school together; still, before they slept, they sat upon the guarded roof with the stars above, the earth beneath; still through the free half of the day they went out into Paris. They saw the angel and the demon; knew that they could only know both because they were formed of both — and strove with incessancy to sublime the demon.

At last they could keep school no longer. . . .

They came down into the street and heard thé tocsin, as they had heard it for days before. A multitude was in the street. Hoof sound and wheel sound, and here was a carriage going heavily over the paving-stones. Behind it laboured a second and a third, "Non-jurant priests and Aristocrats going to prison —" One in the multitude flung a stone; others ran before the horses, made a wall that stopped them. The coachman flung down the reins, got from the boxes. Overhead the bells were making a wild and rapid sound. Red everywhere — and a sudden sprouting, like March points above the earth, of pike and sabre.

Those who had been crowded into the carriages came forth and stood in the street with blanched faces and a trembling of the limbs. There were men and there were women. "*Citoyens*, we, like you, have wished in our hearts to do right —"

"The liars!" cried a small man with a cutlass, and leaped upon one of the slighter prisoners. Frenzy loosened, shrieked.

The traces had been cut, the horses taken away. The threatened men and women pressed close to the carriage bodies, the wheels, finding here a momentary wall to stand against. The first, the second wall were dragged away, the prisoners massacred.

Jean and Espérance Merlin, coming into the street from their house, faced the third carriage and the miserable ones pressed against it. . . . The two made way through the shouting throng, stood before the prisoners. In the opposing and threatening mass, drawn from these by-streets, they saw more than one or two whose children they had taught. "*Citoyens!* Shall we be tyrants, slaying because it is not hard to slay? What value in the New if it be not more blissful-fearless than the Old! Wisdom in our hearts — mercy for these folk!"

A woman living in that street cried out: "It is as those two say! I'll follow the Merlins who taught the children so well!"

Espérance stretched out her arms. "O friends, we have had enough of smiting! They are as helpless as are children!"

Paris gathered here in this street let those endangered go; let them enter the house where the Merlins lived. There, at the top of the house, during that week's madness, they stayed obscure, unharmed; at the end of it got somehow from Paris, to the frontier, over the frontier.

Jean and Espérance Merlin closed their school. In Paris lay Freedom, wounded in her own house. . . .

The two were of the months that followed and not of them. They were of the Revolution, but not of the anger, revenge, and fear that wove the ugly garment. Long since they had themselves worn the ugly garment. Shreds and

patches of it might yet cling, and in times of inner weakness burn like the Nessus weave it was. But as a whole they wore it not; their being had discarded it.

In this time and place they were not Jacobin, they hardly seemed Girondin. To the unaided eye they did not plot nor plan. They went about, and it seemed that they were concerned only with helping individual wretchedness. Perhaps they themselves saw something further and wider than the immediate and individual. . . .

A power that was simple and strong, direct and friendly, became a raft to sustain them in the boiling sea of the here and now. Infuriated men and women, men and women gnawed by suspicion of all neighbours and things, even, it might seem, of picture and statue and of the moving air, yet trusted them and let them pass. Mad Paris that tore its own flesh tore not them. They stayed many months in this trebly-fevered world. All that might be perceived was that a few minds caught from them calm and reflection, followed them into insight.

Winter, and the red robe showed redder yet, and the black shadows blacker yet. Now the guillotine took toll, took toll, took toll. Spring with her bright laughter, but the earth more maddened, more terror-struck; summer, and the wild pace heightened. . . .

Jean and Espérance sat in a starlight night upon that bit of level roof just without their attic door. They leaned against the parapet, they looked afar and downward.

"Fear and hate and love and courage — all in the alembic! See the red, the green, the blue — the lion, the rose, the lily. . . . Salamander, sylph, undine and gnome — the beast and the human one and the god walking free. . . ."

Their hands touched upon the parapet, they looked afar over the city. "Babylon —"

"Rome and an amphitheatre there — O the children down below!"

They sat there long, watching as from a tower head. A meteor gleamed. "I think that soon we shall leave this house that we have loved. The city maddens more and more. We shall not escape accusation."

"No. . . . Prison — death — life again!"

The suns wheeled in space. The invisible centres indrew and outflung.

Three nights after this they were taken. Accused of plots — known to have succoured Foes. They came before judges who once had had some knowledge of them, but in delirium old knowledges pass, and it made no difference. But the essential unity of the two so impressed itself that none seemed to think of parting them. Together they came into prison.

Choked were the prisons of Paris. Space once unused was brought into requisition, corridors and vacant guard-rooms, rooms not meant for prisoners, rooms looking through fair-sized windows upon courtyards. Prisoners went every day from prison to death, but immediately more prisoners filled their places. Jean and Espérance looked with others out of fair-sized windows; with others were let to move about in a small courtyard, Patriot-guarded.

One great tree stood in this yard and underneath had been placed heavy benches. Here, through much of the day, might sit the prisoners.

None knew, in the unreason of the time, why some scarce touched prison before the tumbrils came for them, taking

them away to the place of death, and why some were left so long in prison. Some were left so long that in a strange and piteous way the place grew homelike. In this prison a cluster of persons were so kept from week to week, from month to month.

There was a group. . . . None knew why after long crowding this prison should now by degrees be emptied, leaving at last a handful. None knew why it did not at once fill again, nor why these few were left like shades or prophecies, in the comfortless rooms, in the sombre courtyard, under the sombre tree.

All was not sombre. This group had become friends. Ripe autumn light lay at times upon the stones and made the tree aerial. Sitting on the steps before Death's great door the hearts of men and women were unbound, their minds enlarged. More than twice or thrice a day the grey walls threw back laughter. Those there were who thought, imagined, visioned. Underneath the pall the good-as-dead smiled and planned the dawn.

Jean and Espérance Merlin sat, part of this handful, beneath the tree. This individual earth-summer was turning toward brown autumn, toward winter icy-fingered. The leaves of the tree were drifting down. But ever, behind the winter, might be seen another spring.

In this cluster of prisoners were men and women, the young, those at prime and the old. Many grades of opinion were there, various lives and sorrows and joys. But all now were friends, and as friends sat and talked.

They talked of Freedom. . .

It seemed that it was the Unimprisonable.

Fell a bright evening, soft and bright and sweet in the courtyard, beneath the tree from which the leaves were

falling. Toward sunset came a visitation, a gaoler and men with tri-colour sashes, officers of the Terror, of that bloody excrescence upon Revolution. "To-morrow other folk here, but none here who are now here!"

"Unless it be their ghosts —"

They turned and went, leaving the gold light in the courtyard. "Imperishably here, too!" said Espérance Merlin. "How many prisons, and how many leave-takings of prisons! Let it pass into a mood, grave and lifted!"

The rooms darkened, the courtyard darkened. This cluster of prisoners sat quietly, talked quietly until the stars shone like fruit in the tree. They parted, to sleep, or to lie straight and still upon their pallets, or to rise and measuredly pace, through the night, their prison room. The night passed. In the faintest dawn, by candlelight, they were brought together in the courtyard. Food and drink were given them, and they waited here for the wagons of death.

Among the distinguishing characteristics of this time must be placed courage before the death of the body. None of this especial cluster lacked that courage. It had been long a cluster, thought and feeling running swiftly from globe to globe. The eastern sky, behind the building line, began to glow.

Said an old man, "When I was ten years old I knew part of a lane that led from our farm. It ran a long way, and then it seemed to end in a rock wall. I thought that it ended there. When I made up stories to myself about it, I always said 'the end'! One day I hid from my mother and went fearfully up that long way just to see the end. And when I got there the lane bent around the rock wall, and

there was a road, a wider road. . . . It astonished me and pleased me. . . ."

Jean Merlin spoke. "There is a network of roads — and one passing out of the net. . . ."

Said a woman: "Shall we have Freedom here — here on earth? O my country! O my world!"

Espérance turned to her, took her hand. "Oh, widened the country, and transformed the world! And here a haven of rest and here again long adventure. But ever a richer rest and ever a higher adventure! And ever more worth while — ever a stronger and sweeter taste. Ever more real, and ever better choice of what shall be real —"

They heard the tumbrils, the wagons of death. These stopped, the barred gate of the courtyard opened. The sky was coral red behind the tree. A still dawn, and the leaves falling gently from the boughs. . . .

The streets and houses of the city, the moving people, indifferent now, so often had they seen them, to these wagons, the sky above the city. . . . Jean and Espérance sat side by side. "When this day, too, shall be one of many past days — and we strike the note again and recall it, and say, 'Even then the bitter bore the sweet. . . .'"

"Together. . . . The widening ring of the together. Fused — the this and that, the we and they fused. . . . Then is born the immortal being of all the memories! Then begins the deep adventure of that That!"

"Are you woman — am I man? We are one!"

"Are these who go with us others? Are these others in the streets, and these in the square to which we come? — O action within and upon One's self! O moulding hand moulding One's self! And then, far beyond and overhead,